

YOGA VASISTHA

by Swami Jyotirmayananda

Vol. V: Nirvana Purva-Uttarardha



YOGA VAŚIṢṬHA VOL. V

**NIRVANA PRAKARANA
PURVARDHA—UTTARARDHA**

by Swami Jyotirmayananda

YOGA RESEARCH FOUNDATION
(Non-profit Organization)

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1. To spread the laws of spiritual life.
 2. To promote understanding of the unity of life among all people, regardless of race, sect, creed and sex, and also to promote harmony among all religions by emphasizing the fundamental unity of all prophets, saints, sages and teachers.
 3. To help suffering humanity by teaching the higher moral standards, prayers and meditation.
 4. To give regular classes in the teachings of Yoga, Vedanta and Indian Philosophy.
 5. To promote Universal Peace and Universal Love.
 6. To promote the cultural growth of humanity on the basis of everlasting spiritual values of life.
 7. To guide students and devotees all over the world.
 8. To print and publish spiritual literature.
 9. Anyone devoted to the ideals of truth, non-violence and purity can be a member of this Foundation.
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YOGA
VĀSISTHA
VOL. V



DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to Sri Swami Lalitananda, the Vice-president of the Yoga Research Foundation, who is the illustrious author of *Yoga in Life*, editor of the *International Yoga Guide*, as well as the poet-composer of *Yoga Mystic Songs for Meditation* in 11 volumes.

It was the dispassion and intense aspiration of Sri Swami Lalitananda that resulted in my giving the complete series of lectures on *Yoga Vasistha* as well as the writing of this present book.

The vast work of promoting my teachings and works in the West has been carried on untiringly, with an unassuming zeal and utter self-effacement, by this noble *sanyasin* for over thirty years. The spiritual world will ever remain deeply indebted to her for the formation and existence of the mighty organization—the Yoga Research Foundation—which is a fountainsource of light and wisdom for spiritual aspirants all over the world.

May God bless her abundantly!

Swami Jyotirmayananda

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Yoga Vasistha can bring a complete transformation in the human personality. Like the beggar in an old fairy tale who turned into a King when a charmed golden ring fell into his hand, anyone who turns the pages of this book with an inquisitive mind and a heart searching for the truth will discover the infinite beauty of his inner Self. *Yoga Vasistha* nourishes the soul and awakens a yearning for freedom and an exquisite peace unknown before.

This unique book par excellence has been long awaited by advanced *Vedantins* and yogis of India because it is only available in rare editions of the last century. And it is what the enquiring minds of the West have been desperately needing since they heard the remarks of Schopenhauer: "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upanishads*. It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death."

H.H. Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda, internationally known lecturer and writer of over fifty books on yoga and *Vedanta* philosophy, has been interpreting and commenting on *Yoga Vasistha* for over thirty years: first in India for nine years at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, Sivananda Ashram, Ludhiana, and other parts of India, and also in the Dehradun Women's

College. Since coming to the West, Swamiji lectured in Puerto Rico for six years, and now gives weekly lectures here in Miami. Available on cassette tapes, these lectures are an undying treasure.

King Shah Jehan had the choice of only one type of food-grain while he was imprisoned for life, and he chose the garbanzo because of its nourishment and adaptability to a variety of tasty dishes. So too, if I could have only one book for some extraordinary reason to read for the rest of my life, I would choose *Yoga Vasistha*. After a brief encounter with *Yoga Vasistha*, the reader will feel that all other books of philosophy have become like old crumbs on the table, while *Yoga Vasistha* stands like the sweet and vitalizing elixir of life.

Unfortunately, however, due to the lack of knowledge of *Yoga Vasistha*, the intelligentsia of the West have been unable to realize the vast treasure of profound knowledge that lies hidden in this great work. For this reason, the wisdom of *Vedanta* has not been understood and assimilated by them.

Yoga Vasistha encompasses in its powerful literature the dramatic stories of the inner states of the mind, and like a brilliant advocate, presents its brief with a convincing voice and expert phrasing. *Yoga Vasistha* has a mystic strategy that convinces the mind to undermine its fancies and imaginations, leading to the realization that the world lies within the mind. Nothing is more inspiring and soul-stirring than when

the mind lifts itself from the quagmire of false perceptions of the senses and sees the contents of waking, dream and deep sleep as the refraction of the Light of Consciousness filtering through the layers of egoistic illusions.

The awe-inspiring awakening of the knowledge that "You are not this body, not this mind, and not this intellect" is uplifting and produces a vital change in the overall perception of the world. It is for this reason that sages warn immature aspirants against the wrong interpretations of this grand philosophy; they emphasize the fact that the wisdom of *Yoga Vasistha* must be received under the guidance of an illumined teacher. For those who are endowed with a mighty strength of intellect and intense dispassion, *Yoga Vasistha* brings for them the clouds of mystic understanding that burst into the flood of unique bliss.

The greatest scriptures of the world have always blended parables, illustrations and stories to bring about a striking impression—like a flash of lightning upon the sleeping mind in order to awaken it sharply to the light of the truth. *Yoga Vasistha* abounds with these. *Yoga Vasistha*, in its broad spectrum, encompasses topics such as the mysteries of the soul, death and reincarnation, the subtle operations of the unconscious mind which bring about repeated embodiments, the psychic powers, the mystic energy known as *Kundalini*, and the techniques of spiritual enquiry and meditation. A studious reader, therefore, will meet for

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the first time a challenge to his intellect to discover the secret wealth of the Self and to explore the mysteries of the mind.

It is to be noted that humor and wit permeate the writings and lectures of Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda, like a green creeper adorning the tree of Liberation. But behind this, Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda gives to the world his most memorable writing which has been guarded as a secret mystic wealth by the sages of India for a long time. This book by Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda presents you with the key to heavenly bliss and perfection, and every page of this book is filled with his blessings.

May the golden sun of your eternal Self rise from behind the horizon of distractions and mental limitations and encompass you in the greatest of beauty and sublime love which are the very essence of your real Self!

Swami Lalitananda

This publication is dedicated:

**by his wife—Srimati Khubla—and his children—
Betty, Lilly, Pulastya, Bhagwandai, Indra, Veda,
Leela, & Prakash—to:**

The late Sri Bhairo Persaud of Toronto, Canada.

**by Dr. Vasanti Puranik & Dr. Subhash Puranik,
Plantation, Florida to:**

**Sri Govind Vyankatesh Puranik
Srimati Lakshmibai Govind Puranik
Jamkhandi, Bijapur, Maharashtra, India**

**Sri Amritrao Tuljopant Phadnis
Srimati Ahilyabai Amritrao Phadnis
Aundh, Satara, Maharashtra, India**

**Sri Ramachandra Govind Puranik
Srimati Seetadevi Ramachandra Puranik
Poona, Maharashtra, India**

**Sri Vishvanath Keshav Joag
Srimati Gangabai Vishvanath Joag
Poona, Maharashtra, India**

**Sri Shankar Ramachandra Kanitkar
Srimati Umabai Shankar Kanitkar
Poona, Maharashtra, India**

**Sri Chintamani Vishvanath Joag
Srimati Kamal Chintamani Joag.
Poona, Maharashtra, India**

**Dedicated to: Dr. Nipan' Shroff, Dr. Leena Shroff,
Reema and Rita, Midland, Texas**

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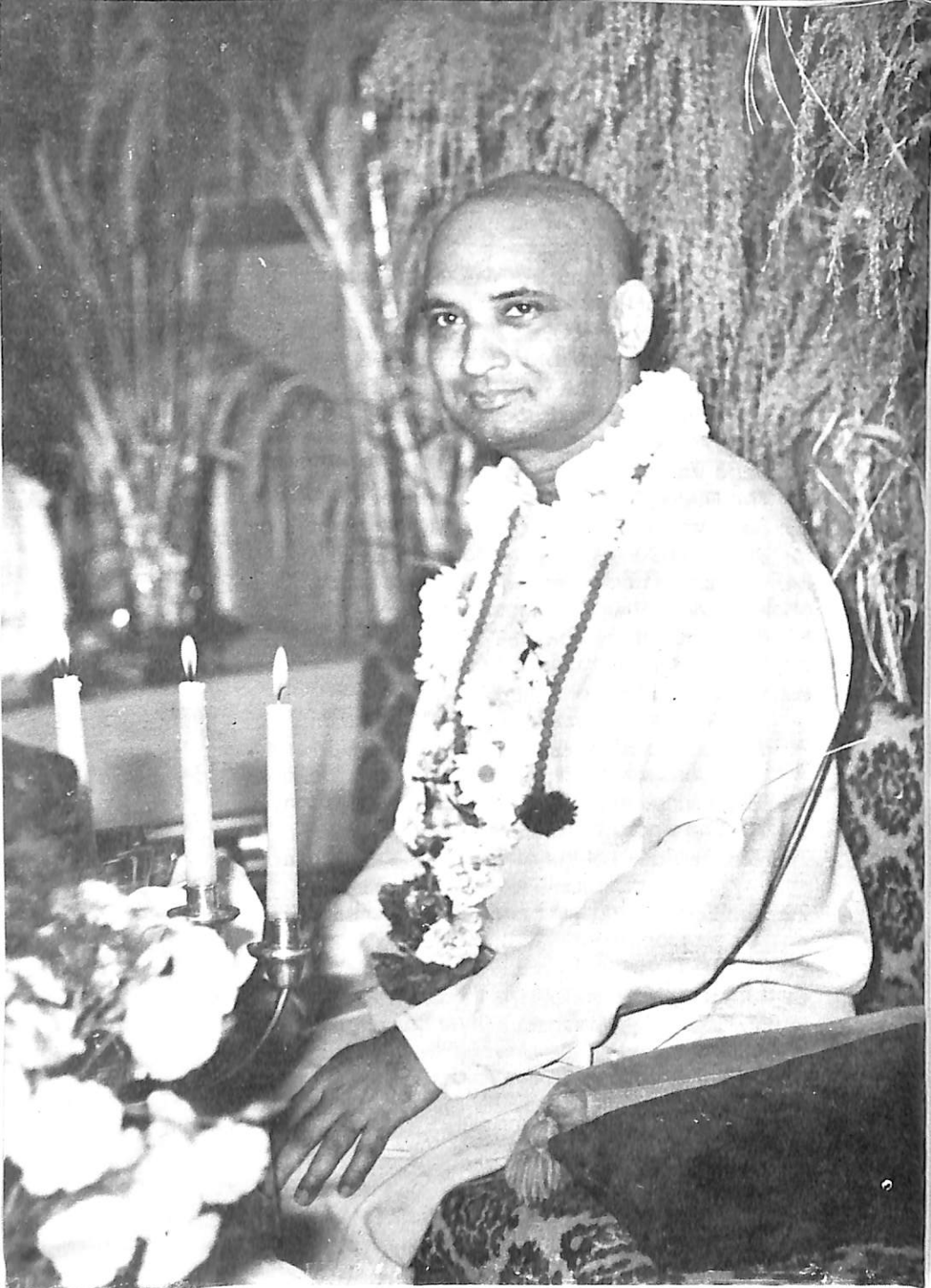
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Author Swami Jyotirmayananda

INTRODUCTION

In the “Bala-Kanda” section of the *Ramayana* it is stated that Sri Rama was given spiritual instructions by Sage Vasistha. *Yoga Vasistha*, a complete and separate work in itself, is that teaching. While the *Ramayana*, the epic poem more popularly known throughout India and the world, describes the life and adventures of Sri Rama, *Yoga Vasistha* presents his inner realization in detail for those who wish to intensify their spiritual life and deepen their understanding. A vast work of approximately 32,000 verses, *Yoga Vasistha* was written by the great poet-sage Valmiki, as was the *Ramayana*, about 500 B.C. or earlier.

Yoga Vasistha, which is virtually unknown in the West due to the scarcity of its English translations, is also known by the names of *Maha-Ramayana*, *Uttar Ramayana*, *Arsha Ramayana*, *Jnana Vasistha*, *Vasistha Ramayana*, and *Vasistha*. But whatever you choose to call it, it is the earliest detailed work of Yoga-Vedanta and gives a magnificent exposition of the subtleties and insights of that philosophy with a majestic sweep that has never been equaled in any metaphysical work since.

Every kind of exposition is employed in its presentation—didactic instructions, answers to doubts, parables, and stories within stories. Here, for example, the interlock-

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ing system of stories within stories enhances the vision of worlds within worlds, and of the infinitely complex world of the mind, itself arising from the Cosmic Mind. Many key points of this metaphysical instruction are touched upon over and over again with increasingly deeper meanings. Therefore the work appears to move in vast spirals, ultimately culminating in the Self-realization of Sri Rama.

In "Vairagya Prakarana" of Volume I it will be remembered that Sage Vasistha asked Sri Rama to express the reasons for his depressed state of mind. At this, Sri Rama elaborated upon the transiency and essencelessness of all objects of the world. All that he once thought to be of value and a source of happiness has, through the vision of his penetrative intellect, become nothing but a source of emptiness and misery.

In the first chapter, therefore, Sri Rama has taken what are normally the most value aspects of life and has shown how illusory they are. The purpose here is to promote dispassion (*vairagya*) in the aspirant. Such *vairagya* considers all pleasures of the world, from the lowest form of life to the highest—that of Brahma the Creator—as insignificant and illusory. This is the first and fundamental requirement on the path of wisdom that leads to Self-realization.

In the second chapter, "Mumukshu Prakarana," it has been shown that certain qualifications are necessary for an aspirant before he can effectively move on the path towards that state of immortality or Self-realization. Sage Vasistha, therefore, elaborated on the four most important qualifica-

tions—those of serenity, contentment, spiritual enquiry and good association.

In addition, “Mumukshu Prakarana” elaborated on how the aspirant should not rely on destiny, but rather on his own self-effort. The Self within is unlimited, and each person has that same potential within—all that is needed to unlock that infinite potential and creativity is repeated self-effort.

In the third chapter, “Utpatti Prakarana,” Sage Vasistha has shown how the world has evolved from and is sustained by the Absolute through the limitations of the mind. And since the world is merely a projection of the mind conditioned by ignorance, when ignorance is overcome by intuitive wisdom, mind rediscovers its unity with the Cosmic Mind and the individual merges into the Absolute. At this point, the entire world-process is remembered to be nothing but a long dream of the mind from which one has awakened.

The fourth chapter, “Sthiti Prakarana,” aims at steady-ing the knowledge of the Self. Giving insight into the amazing powers of the mind, Sage Vasistha explains that it is the impure mind that causes bondage, while it is the pure mind that gives Liberation. It is *Brahman* who has assumed the role of *jiva* (an individual soul) due to the intensification of *vasanas* (subtle desires). When freed of the *vasanas*, the *jiva* returns to its essential nature—*Brahman*. Just as with the dissolution of clouds the sun is fully revealed in the sky, so too, with the dissolution of *vasanas* the knowledge of the Self becomes fully established in one’s heart.

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In the fifth chapter, “Upashama Prakarana,” Sage Vasistha deals with the topic of the quiescence of the mind. With increasing insight into the falsity of the world-process, the subtle desires of an aspirant begin to dissolve. Consequently, his consciousness goes on expanding until he is fully established in Self-realization. It is *vichar* or spiritual enquiry which enlightens his mind. *Vichar* can be practised by anyone whether he is a king like Janaka or an ascetic like Veethavya. Even demoniac personalities touched by the magic wand of *vichar* may become transformed into enlightened sages. In an eloquent style, abounding with stories and parables, Sage Vasistha gives a profound insight into the mystic art of *vichar*, which, having reached its maturity, blossoms into the intuitional realization of the Self.

In our second volume we covered “Utpatti Prakarana” (sections 66 to 122), the entire “Sthiti Prakarana” and a portion of “Upashama Prakarana” (sections 1 to 13). In the third volume we covered the balance of “Upashama Prakarana” from section 14 to section 93.

The sixth and last chapter of *Yoga Vasistha* is “Nirvana Prakarana,” which is further divided into two parts: “Purvardha” (first half) and “Uttarardha” (second half). In the fourth volume, we explored sections 1 to 110 of “Nirvana Prakarana—Purvardha.” In this fifth volume, we conclude “Nirvana Prakarana—Purvardha” and explore sections 1-94 of “Nirvana Prakarana—Uttarardha,” in which Sage Vasistha’s teachings continue to soar to the sublimest heights of Vedantic wisdom.



Sage Vasistha Imparts Spiritual Wisdom to Sri Rama

प्राप्तेन येन नो भूयः प्राप्तव्यवशिष्यते ।
तत्प्राप्तौ यत्नमातिष्ठेत्कष्ट्याऽपि हि चेष्ट्या ॥

Even if it were to demand strenuous effort, one must strive for that attainment which, having been attained, leaves nothing more to be gained.

(Nirvana Prakarana Uttarardha Section 6-31)

अपुनर्जन्मने यः स्याद्बोधः स ज्ञानशब्दभाक् ।
वसनाशनदा शेषा व्यवस्था शिल्पजीविका ॥

The insight that puts a stop to the recurring births is fit to be called Knowledge. But, the knowledge that is the giver of food and clothes is fit only for livelihood and is not Real Knowledge.

(Nirvana Prakarana Uttarardha. Section 22-4)

प्रवाहपतिते कार्ये कामसङ्कल्पवर्जितः ।
तिष्ठत्याकाशहृदयो यः स पण्डित उच्यते ॥

He who performs his duties as they present themselves to him, like flowing water in a stream, without having any expectation nor depending upon the fruit of action; and he whose heart is like the sky in the autumn season (free of the clouds of impurities)—he is called a Pandita, an enlightened person.

(Nirvana Prakarana Uttarardha Section 22-5)

उद्यति प्रतिपच्चन्द्रे वहति प्रलयानिले ।
आत्मतत्त्वं समं सौम्यं न क्षुभ्यति न शाम्यति ॥

During the full moon the ocean swells up, and during the furious winds of Pralaya, the ocean is dried up; but, the Self is neither agitated, nor can It be dried up. The Self (your essential nature) is ever the same and ever serene!

(Nirvana Prakarana Uttarardha Section 27-10)

**Section 111—*The Divine Sage Brihaspati
Teaches his Son, Kacha***

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, Kacha, the son of Sage Brihaspati (the guru of the gods) also followed the path of absolute renunciation, much like King Shikhidhwaja; and he too attained enlightenment. Therefore, listen to the story of Kacha.

Kacha had hardly completed his childhood and stepped into the age of youth, when he developed a strong aspiration to cross the ocean of the world-process. He was well-versed in the study of the *Vedas*. He approached his father to receive spiritual instructions.

Kacha said: O divine father, you know the secrets of the scriptures. Please enlighten me. How can I release myself from the fetters of this world-process?

Sage Brihaspati replied: O son, absolute renunciation is the only way by which one can cross this ocean of the world-process, because it abounds with innumerable evils. When one attains the state of supreme renunciation, he becomes free from the bondage of the world immediately.

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, having listened to this brief instruction from his father, Kacha entered into a

forest to practise severe austerities. He thought that was the way to attain absolute renunciation.

Sage Brihaspati did not grieve because of this event. Those who possess spiritual greatness are unaffected by union with dear ones, as well as by separation from them. They are immutable like the Sumeru Mountains against the winds of change. For a full eight years, Kacha practised austerities. Then his father, Sage Brihaspati, came to Kacha to impart wisdom to him. Kacha received his father with great joy.

Kacha asked: O father, I have practised absolute renunciation for eight years, and yet I have not experienced supreme peace.

Sage Brihaspati said: O son, you have not yet renounced all that is to be renounced. You must practise absolute renunciation to experience supreme peace.

Sri Vasistha continued: After saying this, Sage Brihaspati disappeared. Therefore, Kacha then renounced even his smallest possessions. He discarded his clothes that were made of bark and leaves, and became a naked ascetic. After three years of intense austerity, he became feeble and terribly weak. Again his father appeared before him and was welcomed by him.

Kacha asked: O father, I have renounced all that is to be renounced, and yet I do not experience the bliss of the Self.

Sage Brihaspati said: O son, *chitta* (the total mind) is all that is. Renounce the *chitta*. Absolute renunciation consists in the renunciation of the *chitta*.

Sri Vasistha continued: Thus saying, Sage Brihaspati flew into the sky, and Kacha commenced his quest for the mind. Even after great efforts, he was unable to discover the mind. Therefore, he proceeded to the heavenly world to receive more instructions from his father.

Kacha asked: O father, what is the nature of the *chitta*? Please explain this to me so that I can renounce it.

Brihaspati explained: O son, the ego in a human being is the essence of the *chitta*. When the ego is renounced, *chitta* is renounced automatically. This form of renunciation can be achieved as easily as one crushes a tender flower with his fingers, or closes and opens his eyes.

This ego has arisen because one does not know the witnessing Self within. When the witnessing Self is known and realized, the ego is destroyed.

In fact, the ego in you is not a reality. It has arisen like an illusion. Just as a snake appears where there is really a rope, or a mirage appears in desert sands, so this ego appears due to ignorance.

The Self is the only Reality, devoid of beginning and end, essentially Pure Consciousness, vast like the sky. The Self alone exists everywhere and at all times. It is the Self

that shines through all beings. Egos are like the numerous waves of the Ocean of the Self.

No one can describe the nature of the ego and whence it arose, creating a veil between the Seer (the Self) and the seen (the world of illusion), because the ego is not a reality.

O son, the petty notion that "I am this body that has arisen out of my father and mother, and is confined to time and space" must be renounced. Instead, entertain the thought, "I am the Self that is pure, eternal, everlasting, all-pervading, effulgent, and non-dual." Just as sap pervades a tree through its leaves, branches, flowers and fruits, so *Brahman* (the Self) pervades all that exists. You are that *Brahman*—not this illusory ego.

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, after listening to his father, Kacha practised spiritual enquiry. He discovered the nature of the Self by renouncing the ego. He became enlightened.

Section 112—*The Parable of a False Being*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, just as Kacha, the son of Sage Brihaspati, became free from egoism and brought about the termination of the world-process, so may you also abide in the Self, renouncing all illusions.

O Rama, know this ego to be false. Do not be sustained by egoistic vision. Just as horns do not exist on a hare, so is this ego nonexistent.

When the very ego does not exist, then who is there to be born and to die? Who is there to gather the fruits of illusion from the vast sky of Consciousness? It is from the fertile soil of ego that the sprouts of subtle desires grow, giving rise to the crop of the world-process. But when the ego is negated, the world-process ceases to be.

When the ego is negated, you exist as the Self—indivisible, devoid of the thoughts and imaginations of the mind, all-pervading, Pure Consciousness. You become subtler than the subtlest; you become the very Reality behind all that exists.

Waves appear different from the ocean, even though they are not. Golden ornaments, though nothing but gold, appear different from it. In the same way, you are the Ocean of the Self, but due to the illusion of the ego, you consider yourself different from It.

O great-armed Rama, listen to this enlightening parable about a False Being (Mithya Purusha). There was a False Being constructed by illusion. He possessed the intellect of a child and was distracted due to ignorance. He was born in an uninhabited place, and lived in the region of the void. There was no one other than that Being.

One day this Being thought within himself, "The sky is very dear to me. Let me protect this possession of mine with great care." Thus thinking, he made a house to confine the sky and protect it. But as time passed, the house was destroyed by the inclemencies of the weather.

Believing the sky to be lost, the False Being began to grieve, crying, "Alas, my dearest house-ether, you are dead! Where have you gone within a single moment? How beautiful you were."

Then the False Being thought up another plan to keep the sky under his care. He dug a well, and rejoiced at seeing the sky bound within the walls of the well. But even this well was destroyed in time. He again wept and cried bitterly for the loss of the sky.

Then he created a pot, and delighted at the idea of keeping the sky confined to the pot. But that pot too came to an end, and he suffered intense grief at the loss of the pot-ether.

He created many other devices to capture the sky and keep it under his protection, but he did not succeed. He continued to move from misery to misery created by his own illusions.

Section 113—*The Meaning of False Purusha*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, know that False Being to be the ego (*ahamkara*). It has arisen out of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion). It is non-existent, yet it considers itself the Self, and enters into the illusion of desires and karmic involvements.

This ego is born in the world of the void because this world of time and space is sustained by ignorance. When ignorance is removed, this world is seen as *Brahman*. In

fact, this ego is non-existent, because it arises out of nothingness.

It develops the illusion, "I am the Self," and tries to protect the Self, which is vast like the ether and the all-pervading space, by creating different bodies of gods, demons, men, animals, and other beings.

Every embodiment is an erroneous effort to protect the ether of the Self. Loss of the body is considered a pathetic development. But just as the loss of a house does not affect the house-ether, so the loss of the body does not destroy the Self that sustains it.

The ego assumes different forms. The individual soul, intellect, mind, *chitta* (unconscious), *maya* (illusion), *Prakriti* (Nature), thoughts, desires, time, space, and all the names and forms of the world are just different manifestations of the ego. When the ego is eliminated by intuitional vision, all these differences vanish, even as a dream vanishes upon waking. *Brahman* alone exists.

Driven by the ego, a human being is ever concerned with protecting the Self. He builds the house of karmas, the well of unconscious impressions, the pot of embodiment, and manifold other forms of desires to encompass the Self, but he continues to experience misery after misery. His efforts are all useless.

There is no need to protect the Self by creating the walls of mental illusion. The Self is, in fact, the sustainer of the ego and all that it has created.

Experiences of loss and destruction are mental illusion. There is no loss for the Self. People, however, continue to grieve when they fail in their efforts to capture the Self and confine It to their mental limitations.

The Self is even greater than the sky. It is supremely pure and subtle. It is supremely auspicious and blessed. How can anyone capture the Self and confine It to a limited form? When the concepts of support and security are destroyed, the mind imagines the loss of the very Self. But how can the Self that sustains all and is the Reality behind all be destroyed?

O Rama, the Self alone exists. It is not subject to birth and death. There is no loss or gain for the Self. It sustains the ego, so how can It be sustained by the ego? Therefore, root out this illusory ego along with its varied manifestations by the force of knowledge, and abide in the all-blissful Self!

Section 114—*The Negation of the Concepts of Existence and Non-existence*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, in the beginning, the Mind arose from *Brahman*. It is this Cosmic Mind that continues to sustain the dreams of the world-process, though, in fact, It is not different from *Brahman*.

Just as fragrance is not different from the flower that emanates it, waves are not different from the ocean, and rays are not different from the sun, so too, the Cosmic Mind is not different from *Brahman*.

This Mind, overcome by ignorance, has become the basis and the cause of the world-process. In fact, the world that is projected by the Mind is like the illusory snake seen where there is only a rope. The projected world is sustained by the Reality of *Brahman*.

When one intensifies the feeling that the world is different from *Brahman*, he begins to believe in the difference. But if he develops the feeling that the world is not different from *Brahman*, then he sees the disappearance of all differences.

O Rama, those who believe that the rays are different from the sun truly find the rays to be different. On the other hand, if they were to see that the rays are not different from the sun, then they would be seeing the Truth. The world-process is a deviation from Truth caused by mental illusion.

One who rises beyond the concepts of perceiver and perceived—beyond the illusion of the individualized subject as well as that of the world of objects—such a person is truly great. His vision of the Self is perfect and eternal. He abides in the state of *nirvikalpa* where all mentations are transcended by Consciousness.

By an act of the mind, the soul considers itself different from the Self. Led by the limitations of the mind, the soul assumes different embodiments. It becomes as small as a worm and as great as the Sumeru Mountains. Through illusion it becomes a miserable creature. But it regains its glorious nature as *Brahman* through intuitional realization.

By practising meditation upon the fact that "This world is *Brahman*," one sees the disappearance of the world. Just as the waves, foam, and bubbles are nothing but the ocean, so this world consisting of different sense perceptions and different functions of the organs of action, is nothing but *Brahman*.

O Rama, whatever you hear, see, touch, smell and taste, realize that it is nothing but *Brahman*. There is no multiplicity here. Though performing your duties, be established in the vision that all is *Brahman*.

Bondage and liberation are only realities with reference to the ego. When you have negated the ego itself, there is neither bondage nor liberation. Therefore, renounce all concerns for bondage and liberation, master the senses, cross the stream of mind, be free from pride and egoism, perform your duties in life, and abide in the Self. Be a great soul, O Rama!

Section 115—*The Characteristics of a Liberated Sage*

Sage Vasistha said: O sinless Rama, abide in your true Self, which is fearless, imperishable and beyond virtue and vice. Renounce all the doubts of the mind, and become the Great Actor, Great Enjoyer, and Great Renouncer.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, tell me the characteristics of a person who is a Great Actor, Great Enjoyer and Great Renouncer. Please explain this mysterious attainment of a sage.

Sri Vasistha said: In ancient times, Bhagavan Shiva taught three spiritual vows (*vratas*) to his beloved disciple, Bhringisha. As a result of this teaching, Bhringisha attained enlightenment. He became free from the miseries of the world-process.

It happened thus. Once Bhringisha approached Bhagavan Shiva, and with folded hands, asked Him: O God, I am deluded by this perishable world-process. Though I possess intellectual knowledge pertaining to the illusoriness of the world, yet I am not free from grief. It continues to consume me like a dreadful fever. What attitude should I adopt so that I can abide in the transcendental peace of the Self even while living in this transient world?

Bhagavan Shiva replied: Adopt the attitude of a *Maha Karta* (Great Actor), a *Maha Bhokta* (Great Enjoyer), and a *Maha Tyagi* (Great Renouncer). You will abide in the fearless, immutable Self, and attain freedom from the world process.

Now listen to the characteristics of these three great vows. When you develop a profound conviction that the Self is neither the actor nor the enjoyer, you will rise beyond virtue and vice. Then you will be called a *Maha Karta*—a Great Actor.

He who is free from attachment and hatred as well as from pleasure and pain, who performs actions without expecting a reward, but for the sake of Cosmic welfare alone—such a person is a Great Actor.

He who is free from egoism, jealousy and other negative qualities of the mind, who continues to maintain his inward reflection on the Self even while engaged in diverse activities, is called a *Maha Karta*.

He who has no attachment to anything in this world, who is the immutable Witness to the changing conditions of the world, is called a Great Actor.

He who is neither elated during prosperous conditions nor depressed during adverse circumstances is called a Great Actor.

He who follows the course of his fructifying karmas without becoming attached to any development in life is a Great Actor.

He who maintains his mental balance during the varying conditions of life and is above virtue and vice is called a *Maha Karta* (Great Actor).

He who is peaceful towards both his friends as well as his enemies, whose vision is not dimmed by the prosperous and adverse developments of the world, is a *Maha Karta*.

Though abiding in the body, which is subject to birth, death, and other modifications, one is called a *Maha Karta* if he maintains a balanced mind because of the vision of the Eternal Self.

Now I will tell you the qualities of a *Maha Bhokta* (Great Enjoyer):

If one has no hatred towards any creature, does not desire anything of this world, and enjoys the fruits of his fructifying karmas, whether pleasant or painful, with a balanced mind, then he is called a Great Enjoyer.

If one's mind is not distracted due to pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, then he is a Great Enjoyer.

He who abides in *Brahmic* Consciousness, and views birth, death, prosperity and adversity with equal vision, is called a *Maha Bhokta*.

Just as waves of different proportions are accepted by the ocean with equal vision, so all varying conditions of the world are accepted by the sage with a balanced mind. Such a sage is a *Maha Bhokta*.

He in whom the qualities of non-violence, mental balance, and contentment arise like moonbeams from the moon is called a *Maha Bhokta*.

While tasting either bitter or sweet articles of food, if one continues to maintain a balanced mind, he is a Great Enjoyer. He who enjoys the bitter and sweet conditions of life without being distracted from his inward vision of the Self is called a *Maha Bhokta*.

Now listen to the qualities of a *Maha Tyagi* (Great Renouncer):

He who has renounced virtue and vice, pleasure and pain, and birth and death because of his establishment in *Brahman* is called a *Maha Tyagi* (Great Renouncer).

He who has renounced all desires of the heart, all doubts of the mind, and all activities of the body by steadying the intellect in *Brahman* is called a Great Renouncer.

He who has understood the illusoriness of the body, mind, senses and the diverse conditions of the world, and has thus renounced his attachments to all these, is called a Great Renouncer.

If one is established in the understanding, "I am not this body; I am not subject to birth and death; there is no desireable nor undesirable action for me," then he is a Great Renouncer. He who has renounced all names and forms and has realized the non-duality of the Self is a Great Renouncer.

Thus, Bhagavan Shiva instructed his disciple, Bhringisha. After listening to the characteristics of a *Maha Karta, Maha Bhokta and Maha Tyagi*, Bhringisha attained enlightenment.

Therefore, O Rama, develop *Brahma Bhavana* (a constant flow of mind towards *Brahman*) by realizing that the world is an illusory projection on the immutable substratum—the Divine Self. All worldly conditions have a beginning and an end. The Self is imperishable, pure and effulgent.

All objects of the world, at all times, are, in reality, the Supreme Self. Realize this truth, "I am That *Brahman*—the Reality behind all names and forms." You will climb the

ascending heights of wisdom, and attain freedom from all miseries and sorrows.

When your internalized movement enables you to be free from egoistic consciousness, you will continue to perform your daily duties in life without wavering from your steadiness in the Self.

Section 116—*Characteristics of a Dissolving Chitta*

Sri Rama asked: O knower of *dharma* (righteousness), what are the characteristics of a mind when it begins to melt in *Brahman* due to the destruction of its *vasanas* (subtle desires)?

Sri Vasistha replied: Even in the most provocative conditions, such a luminous mind does not develop greed, delusion and other negative tendencies. It is like a lotus that remains untouched by the waters of the world-process.

When egoism, which is the source of all the evils of the mind, is burned up by the fire of wisdom, then the lustrous beauty of cheerfulness never fades from the face of the yogi.

When the knots of subtle desires are gradually destroyed, all the negative traits of the mind, such as anger and delusion, continue to diminish in the personality of a sage.

Desire becomes exhausted. Greed runs away, no one knows where. The senses are not elated with excitement. There is no sense of regret due to any development.

Misery does not multiply. The sense of elation does not surge in the heart. The refreshing breeze of equal vision blows, cooling the feverish anguish of the heart.

The reactions of pleasure and pain that are seen in the countenance of a sage are mere reflections cast on a tranquil lake. They do not color the mind of a sage, which stands ever unaffected due to its inner insight into the unreality of the world-process.

When the *chitta* dissolves, a sage is adored even by the gods. His heart becomes flooded by the moonlight of equal vision.

The personality of a sage is decked with beautiful ornaments of humility, calmness, universal love, spiritual power, sparkling purity, and Divine grandeur.

Though encountering diverse conditions of prosperity and adversity, a sage is beyond pleasure and pain. All the miseries of life terminate in his Consciousness. Those who do not endeavor to attain this state of enlightenment are indeed despicable human beings.

This world-process is like an ocean of miseries. Since one has entered into it, one should develop dispassion towards the perishable pleasures of the world and try to

cross this ocean by enquiring, "Who am I?" If one's *chitta* melts in the fire of wisdom, then one crosses the ocean of the world-process and experiences the infinite bliss of the Self.

Section 117—*Prajapati Manu Instructs Ikshwaku*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, listen to the manner in which the originator of your family line, King Ikshwaku, attained enlightenment.

While ruling his kingdom with righteousness, the King one day entered a secluded place and enquired within himself. He reflected upon the nature of old age, death, pain, pleasure and the numerous fleeting experiences of life. He wanted to know the cause of this world-process. Unable to find answers to his enquiries, he went to see his father, Prajapati Manu, in the heavenly world.

He approached his father with humility, and asked: O compassionate father, I want to understand the true nature of this world-process. How vast is this world? When and how was this world created? How can I attain freedom from the widespread net of this world-process and soar in the absolute expansion of the Self?

Sage Manu replied: You have asked a wonderful question. This question of yours is the eradicator of the seed of the world-process.

This visible world is, in fact, an illusory appearance, like a mirage. The Self is the Reality behind this apparent world.

This world is reflected in the Self due to illusion. Though the Self sustains the appearance of the world-process, yet It is unaffected by the world of multiplicity, much as a lake is unaffected by the reflections that appear in it.

Bondage and release are facts for the conditioned mind. But in the state of enlightenment, there is no bondage, so there is no need for release. Therefore, O King, attain freedom from the illusion of the world-process and become fearless.

Section 118—*Methods for Attaining Self-realization*

Prajapati Manu continued: Like waves arising in the ocean, the world-process arises in *Brahman*. The mind overcome by ignorance continues to be colored by diverse impressions. The Self, conditioned by the limited mind, assumes the role of an incarnating soul that travels through the illusory world-process, seeking its liberation from the wheel of birth and death.

In fact, the experiences of pleasure and pain exist only in the mind. The Self is ever free from the modifications of the mind. This Self cannot be realized by merely studying the scriptures. It can be realized only by the intuitive intellect, which is free from egoism and attachment.

Just as a traveler sees different scenes and sights of nature in a detached manner as he journeys on, so an aspirant must develop a spirit of detachment towards all the passing conditions of the world.

He must not be lenient with the senses, nor should he inflict pain on them by undue withdrawal from the sense-objects. With your intellect abiding in the Self, let the senses operate comfortably.

The intellect that sustains the concept, "I am this body," must be abandoned, because it is the cause of bondage. On the other hand, one must develop that intuitive intellect which sustains the understanding, "I am subtler than the vast sky."

O King, dwell constantly upon that Self which is the devourer of time itself. Time is the Spirit of Death that destroys all; yet it, in turn, is devoured by the Self. You are that Self, beyond time and space.

Relinquish your attachment to the perishable objects of the world and direct your mind to the majesty of the Divine Self.

Though enfolding her child in her loving arms, a sleeping mother might dream that she has been separated from her child due to the illusion of her dream. In the same way, one dreams of being separated from his Self due to ignorance.

Since one does not understand the immortal and imperishable nature of the Self, one considers the death of the physical body as his utter loss. He cries in agony, "Alas, I am going to die! I am destroyed by death."

Therefore, O son, practise *Brahma bhavana*—the flow of mind towards *Brahman*. Free your mind of its desires for the world-process by discovering the illusoriness of the world and the reality of the Absolute Self. Thus, though ruling your kingdom, you will be abiding in the infinite bliss of the Self.

Section 119—*The Powers of Ignorance and Knowledge*

Manu said: This all-pervading Self entertains the ignorant by assuming the form of creation, and enters into the childish games of the world-process. But this same Self effaces the world-process with the power of knowledge for one who is enlightened. Bondage is intensified by *avidya shakti* (the power of ignorance) arising from the Self, and liberation is attained by *vidya shakti* (the power of knowledge) proceeding from the very same Self.

This Self becomes the world of the not-self for the ignorant by the miraculous power of attachment. The shining Self disappears from one's view due to the clouds of desires. Therefore, be endowed with the invulnerable armour of *Brahman* by understanding that the world is a reflection of the Self. You will not be affected by the numerous arrows of delusion discharged by the forces of darkness.

With a purified mind assert, "All this is nothing but the Supreme Self." Maintain this luminous thought-process at all times. Do not entertain thoughts guided by egoistic vision, based upon the erroneous ideas, "This is desirable; this is undesirable."

Acquire the weapon of spiritual oblivion by practising *samadhi* (superconsciousness). Let the world be "forgotten" by your consciousness. Wield this weapon with the firm grip of equal vision and slay the multiplicity of the world-process.

By the practice of *samadhi*, first withdraw your mind from the objects of the world. Then destroy the forest of subtle impressions based upon virtue and vice. Having gone beyond the subtle realms of the *chitta*, attain *Brahman* and become free from grief.

Section 120—*Seven States of Wisdom Taught by Sage Manu*

Manu continued: O King, one must promote a purified intellect by studying the scriptures and following the sages. This is the first *bhumika* (stage of wisdom), known as *shravana* (listening). This is also known as *shubhecha* (good aspiration).

The second stage is called *manana* (reflection). This is also known as *vicharana* (the reflective state of the mind). An aspirant develops the art of reflecting upon the Divine Reality of the Self and the unreality of the world-process.

The third stage is called *nididhyasana* (intense meditation on the Self). In this stage, the impurities of the *chitta*, such as egoism, attachment and hatred, are rendered subtle. Therefore, this stage is also known as *tanumanasi* (the stage of attenuation).

With the intensification of *samadhi*, there arises the fourth stage called *avidya vilaya* (the dissolution of ignorance). It is also known as *sattwapatti* (the fullness of purity in the *chitta*).

As the mind becomes supremely purified, there dawns the light of intuitive knowledge, which dispels the darkness of ignorance. This stage enables a sage to become free from the wheel of the world-process. He is now known as a *jivan mukta* (one who is liberated in life).

As the impressions of the world are gradually effaced by the increasing experience of the bliss of Self, a yogi is as if half awake and half sleeping with regards to the realities of the world. The world seems to exist only in a dream-process. This is also known as *asamsakti* (absolute detachment).

Then the yogi ascends the sixth stage called *swasamvedana* (the experience of the bliss of the Self). He becomes so engrossed in the bliss of the Self that he enters into a deep sleep, as it were, as far as the realities of the world are concerned. This is also known as *padartha bhavana*, which is characterized by the cessation of the world-process and an awareness of *Brahman* alone. In

addition, this can be called *turiya*—the fourth state of consciousness. (Waking, dream and deep sleep are the three normal states of consciousness.)

But even this stage merges in the seventh stage, known as *mukti* (supreme liberation). This is the stage called *turiyatita*—that which transcends even the fourth state of consciousness. In the state of *turiya*, there is an awareness of the absence of the world-process; but in *turiyatita*, even this awareness is engulfed in the blazing radiance of the Self.

Of these seven stages, the first three belong to waking consciousness, the fourth belongs to dream consciousness, and the fifth is characterized by sleep consciousness. The sixth is *turiya*, the fourth state of consciousness, while the seventh is *turiyatita*—the absolute state of consciousness.

Section 121—*Two Types of Mental Attitudes*

Sage Manu said: O King, as long as the soul, under the influence of ignorance, is driven by desires for the objects of the world, so long it is called a *jiva* (an individual soul).

But when discriminative knowledge (*viveka*) brings about the dissolution of desires, the soul discards its *jivahood* (individuality) and realizes its identity as *Brahman*.

Let me explain to you the two types of attitudes—one type intensifies bondage while the other leads to liberation.

“These relatives—wife, son, brother, sister, father, mother, etc.—are mine, and I belong to them.” This attitude continues to degrade the soul.

“I do not belong to the relatives, nor do they belong to me. I am the associationless Self.” This attitude leads the soul to the ascending heights of perfection.

O King, take refuge in the Self, shining by Its own light, and view this world as the ether of Pure Consciousness. The moment you do so, you will cross over the ocean of the world-process.

One should develop the attitude, “I am the Consciousness that underlies and operates even through the greatest of deities—Vishnu, Indra, Brahma and others. I am the Reality behind all that has been created.”

A sage who has realized his inner identity as *Brahman*, whose mind has merged in *Brahman*, and who has crossed over the ocean of mortality experiences indescribable bliss.

This world is neither non-existent nor existent, neither conscious nor inert, neither self nor not-self; it is an indescribable expression of *Maya*. Thus reflecting one attains enlightenment.

When ignorance is destroyed, a yogi has no more need for the scriptures that expound the spiritual teachings in various ways. Nor does his mind delight any more in reading novels, stories, dramas, poems and other works of

literary art. With the dissolution of all his mental distractions, he abides in *Brahman* alone.

**Section 122—*The Daily Conduct of an
Enlightened Sage***

Sage Manu continued: An enlightened sage shines like an emperor. His food and clothing are taken care of by other people. He experiences spontaneity in his consciousness.

Like a lion that has broken its fetters, the sage has left the cage of karmic injunctions and torn the fabric of the world-process. He shines like the full moon on a cloudless winter night.

He is as immutable as a mountain and as boundless as the ocean. He enjoys the bliss of his own Self at all times. Ever fulfilled, eternally satisfied, he is untouched by virtue and vice. He is unaffected by pleasure and pain.

Just as a crystal is untouched by the colors that it reflects, so the mind of a sage is untouched by the colors of the world-process.

Though adored by the world, a sage is not elated; though condemned by the world, a sage is not depressed. He does not cause agitation in the world; the world cannot agitate him.

He is beyond the grasp of the mightiest scholarship, yet he is, as it were, within the easy reach of children. A

complexed mind cannot understand him, but a purified mind characterized by utter simplicity can commune with him.

No matter where he sheds his physical body, he is ever established in the Absolute. He may die at a pilgrimage center or in a place where *chandalas* (outcasts) abide.

Those who are desirous of attaining glory and prosperity must worship a liberated sage. Even a glimpse of his benevolent personality bestows infinite blessings.

The supremely sacred abode that is acquired by worship of a sage cannot be secured by numerous *yajnas* (sacrifices) and austerities. Therefore, acquire wisdom by adoring the sages and by listening to their teachings.

Thus saying, Sage Manu went to the summits of Mount Meru, while King Ikshwaku, adopting the vision taught by Manu, attained supreme peace.

Section 123—*Why Siddhis Are Not Desired by a Sage*

Sri Ramachandra asked: In what way are liberated sages different from yogis who have attained *siddhis* (psychic powers)?

Sri Vasistha explained: A sage realizes his very Self as the basis of all that exists. What use does he have for the power of becoming big (*garima*), or the power of becoming minute (*anima*), or the power of flying in the air, or other such powers?

These powers that are acquired by yogis by the practice of intense austerity, meditation, mantra, and *tantra* cannot give rise to liberation. Spiritual enlightenment is caused only by the pursuit of wisdom. These powers may even become obstacles to Self-realization by creating egoism and attachment.

A sage, on the other hand, has intuitively realized the Self. He is the greatest *siddha* (possessor of psychic powers). He has the power to control desire, anger, egoism, hatred, and other ailments of the mind. Such an attainment is much greater than all psychic powers put together.

Whether endowed with specialized psychic powers or devoid of them, a sage is immeasurably greater than a mere *siddha* (possessor of psychic powers) because he is identified with the Self which is the Power of all powers.

Section 124—*Bondage and Liberation for the Individual Soul*

Sri Vasistha continued: If a venerable *brahmin* lives in association with a *chandala* (outcast) woman, he falls from the elevated ideals of a *brahmin* and descends to the level of the low-minded people. In the same way, the Divine Self, living in association with the lowly intellect, descends to the state of *jivahood* (individuality).

The Divine Self is not linked to the process of causation. The individual soul (*jiva*) continues to whirl in the process of birth and death on the basis of its karmas. Karma

and embodiment have a cause and effect relationship similar to that of a seed and its tree.

Samkalpa (faulty willing) is the basis of the world-process. Renounce this *samkalpa*, and you will rise beyond the world-process. The destruction of *samkalpa* is the way to Self-realization. *Raga* (attachment) and *dwesha* (hatred) arise on the basis of the contact of the senses with their objects. If the mind is weaned from all possibility of attachment to the objects of the senses, this leads one to liberation.

Wherever your mind turns on the basis of the senses, there you should discover the fallacy of superficial pleasures, and gain insight into the underlying Reality of the Self. Thus, the mind turns towards the lofty state of intuition.

If the objects of the world are pleasing to your mind, you are bound to the world-process. If you have outgrown the objects of the world, you are liberated.

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever sacrifice you perform, whatever you give in charity, if you continue to maintain the awareness of abiding in the Self, you are neither the enjoyer nor the doer in this world-process.

Victory over the mind is the key to victory over all the fetters of the world-process. Craving, delusion, attachment, pride—all these are sustained by the mind. Therefore, one must conquer the mind with the mind. The lower mind is overcome by the higher mind.

With a sharp iron tool, another piece of unformed iron is cut and worked upon. In the same way, by using the subtle mind sharpened by the quality of discrimination, the gross mind can be operated upon.

Poison is often the antidote to poison. With one weapon, another weapon can be counteracted. Similarly, the mind is subjugated by the mind.

There are three aspects of an individual soul: 1) gross, 2) subtle, and 3) transcendental. The physical body includes both the *sukshma sharira* (astral body) and the *karana sharira* (causal body). These two are composed of the senses, pranas, subtle elements, mind, intellect, ego, and unconscious. The third aspect is the pure Self — eternal and universal.

One must detach oneself from the gross and subtle aspects of his personality and attach himself to the transcendental Self.

When the *samkalpas* of the mind are negated, one rises beyond the waking and dreaming states of consciousness. With the conquest over ignorance, even the causal darkness of sleep is crossed over. A sage abides in *turiya* (the transcendental state of consciousness).

Though abiding in this world, he negates all its objects in his consciousness. He is not deluded; he does not perceive reality in the objects.

The following parable is cited to illustrate this state of *turiya*. Once a hunter, while chasing a deer, happened to see

a sage immersed in quiet reflection. He asked the sage, "Have you seen a deer running this way, injured by my arrow?"

The sage replied, "O good man, we are sages dwelling in the forest. We do not possess the usual form of ego which is characteristic of most people. O friend, it is the ego-dominated mind which sustains the functions of the senses. This mind has dissolved in me. I am not aware of the three states of consciousness (waking, dream and deep sleep). I abide in *turiya*, wherein the world does not exist. Therefore, how can it be possible for me to be aware of your hunting expedition and the hunted deer?"

The hunter was confounded with this answer. He went his way. Such is the state of *turiya*, wherein both the hunter ego along with the hunted soul vanish from the view of the intuitive vision of the sage.

Section 125—*Steadiness in Turiya Consciousness*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the main purpose of all teachings is to negate the world of duality. There is neither ignorance nor *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion). The transcendental *Brahman* alone exists.

But this *Brahman* is imagined differently by different philosophers. Some describe it as an absolute void. Some believe in the creatorship of God. Some expound subjective idealism. Actually, they are all talking about the same absolute Self, just using different concepts.

O sinless Rama, by the development of wisdom, negate this world-process that extends from the objects of the senses to the abstract veil of *Maya*. Thus, abide in *Brahman*, Who is supreme bliss. Abiding in your essential nature, become “dumb,” “deaf” and “blind” to the realities of this world.

As you pursue the process of internalization, you will discover the fullness of intuitive knowledge deep within yourself. You will ascend the rungs of spiritual wisdom. Rising beyond waking, dreaming and deep sleep states, you will enter into *turiya*—the fourth state of transcendental consciousness.

Enjoy the immensity of sleep consciousness even while engaged in the activities of the day to day world. When your unconscious impressions sustained by ignorance are effaced by the impressions generated by spiritual vision, you will no longer carry the burden of the world that is revealed by the externalized functions of the mind. Though fully awake to the innermost Self, you will be fast asleep to the realities of the dualistic world.

Egoistic impressions go to form the fabric of the *chitta*. When these impressions are dissolved by knowledge, the *chitta* is transformed into *Chit* (Pure Consciousness). The materialization of *chitta* (mind) out of Pure Consciousness is the process of bondage, but the dematerialization or dissolution of the *chitta* into Pure Consciousness is the process of release.

Do not allow your mind to be overcome by love and hatred. There is nothing pleasant or unpleasant in the world of time and space. This simple understanding is the key to the attainment of supreme mastery over the world.

Simply stop thinking about how to attain objects of pleasure and how to remove objects of pain. This is all that you must do in order to acquire the endless bliss of the Self!

Whoever acquires the knowledge of the Self becomes like the full moon—the very embodiment of nectarine bliss. Though sailing through the clouds of daily activities, the moon-like consciousness of the sage is ever immersed in its own glory.

Section 126—*The Seven States of Wisdom*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, how is the state of wisdom practised by a yogi. What are the characteristics of a yogi's progress as he ascends these steps of wisdom?

Sri Vasistha replied: The *Vedas* have enjoined two paths: *pravritti* (outgoing) and *nivritti* (renunciation). Those who have conquered *raga* (attachment toward the pleasures of the world) follow the path of *pravritti* and perform the virtuous actions enjoined in the *Vedas* for the attainment of heavenly joys after death.

In the course of repeated incarnations, they come to develop a taste for the bliss that arises out of the internalization of the mind. A turtle that has lived for a long time in a

salty ocean may happen to taste a few drops of water from the Milky Ocean of Lord Vishnu. In the same way, souls travelling through the world-process may happen to enjoy some drops of bliss from the higher Self. This is the starting point of their movement on the path of *nivritti* (renunciation of the world-process).

In the first step of spiritual wisdom, a yogi practises dispassion. He reflects upon the essencelessness of the world and the blissful freedom of 'Self-realization. He yearns to be free from the vanities of the world-process. He develops an indomitable will to cross the ocean of the world-process. Such a person has ascended the first step known as *shubheccha* (aspiration for God-realization).

So a yogi continues to adopt the methods that bring about the purification of the *chitta* (the mind-stuff). He lives in good association, worships God, repeats mantra, serves humanity selflessly, and undertakes various other purificatory methods. As his heart is purified, he discovers increasing bliss arising out of the disappearance of the cravings of the mind.

The senseless activities of the ignorant become supremely repugnant to his taste. However, he does not explore the defects of others. He simply devotes himself to the pursuit of righteous deeds in order to purify his heart.

He does not hurt others. He observes vows of truthfulness, purity, contentment, non-covetousness, and non-violence. He ever repulses sinful activities sustained by anger, hatred, pride, greed and infatuation. Since the pleasures of

the world harbor these impure thoughts of the mind, he does not run after them.

His speech abounds with love, compassion, sweetness, truthfulness, and a spirit of goodwill. His speech is in accord with the need of the hour.

These characteristics develop when a yogi continues to practise the first step of wisdom known as *shubhechha* (good aspiration).

Such a person works to acquire the material resources which are needed to maintain his good association and study of scriptures. Those who earn wealth merely to satisfy their hunger are thieves and cheats. They live in a world of mental deceptions.

Eventually, the yogi who has good aspiration is brought into contact with an enlightened guru. Then he studies the mysteries of the *Vedic* scriptures, listens to the teachings, and reflects upon them. He gradually develops a clear understanding of the purpose and the goal of life. He abides in his personality as a home-owner abides in his house—with a full knowledge of all the intricacies of the house.

With the increase of pure impressions generated by the experience of spiritual expansion, he discards even the subtle traces of pride, jealousy and greed, much as a snake discards its outer skin. This is the second step of wisdom known as *vicharana* (reflection). At this stage, a yogi has acquired a true understanding of the supreme Self with the help of scriptures, guru, and service of divine personalities.

Such a person leads a serene life. He turns away from the distractions of the glittering life in the cities and enters into the serene atmosphere of forests. In fact, even if he were to abide in the cities, he actually enjoys the serenity of the forests because of the purity of his heart and the absence of mental distractions.

Just as a lover draws his beloved in a warm embrace, so a yogi draws himself to his own essential nature and experiences infinite bliss while lying on the rock of spiritual awareness. This is the third step of wisdom known as *tanumanasi*, wherein the subtle impurities of the mind are extremely attenuated.

With the dissolution of egoistic impressions, a yogi experiences two types of *asanga* (detachment): ordinary and extraordinary.

During the first form of detachment, his experiences are along these lines: "I am not the doer and enjoyer of actions performed by the body. I am ever satisfied. I am beyond all actions. The enjoyments of the world are expressions of that terrible disease, the world-process. Pleasure and pain are guided by Divine will. Let me, therefore, enquire into the significance of the great utterances—'I am that,' 'I am *Brahman*,' and the others. Let me attain Self-realization." This is called ordinary detachment.

When a yogi attains intuitional realization of the Self, he becomes supremely detached from the objects of the world by the force of his wisdom. He does not 'develop' the attitude of detachment; rather, he enjoys the majesty of having outgrown the entire world-process.

He experiences infinite sweetness by communing with his supremely beloved Self in the depths of his heart. He is no longer attached to any part of the world. He is not attached to inside or outside, above or below, in the sky or on the earth, to inert matter or living beings. He becomes pure like the sky, without beginning or end.

This is the experience of extraordinary detachment that continues to grow more and more from the fourth step of *sattwapatti* to the seventh step of *turiya*. During all these stages, a yogi is liberated from the world-process.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, what is the condition of those who fail to develop the qualifications for Self-realization? And where do those who have ascended to the lower rungs of wisdom, yet have not attained Self-realization, go after death?

Sage Vasistha explained: The individual soul continues to wander in the world process until that spark of dispassion arises in him on the basis of his coming into association with the wise.

Those who successfully ascended the first step of wisdom (*shubhechha*—good aspiration), go to the heavenly worlds after they die, wherein they enjoy celestial joys to their heart's content. After exhausting the karmas that were meant to be experienced in the astral world, they incarnate in the families of the righteous and the prosperous. The highest are born in a family of yogis. There they recollect their previous achievements and continue their effort with greater success until they reach the goal of Self-realization.

No effort on the spiritual path is ever wasted. The soul continues to evolve through different incarnations. The knowledge gained in previous lives backs up one's efforts in the present.

When spiritual sensitivity develops in a person, he lives with an increasing awareness of the ethical values of life. Such a person is called an *arya* (an arian)—truly noble.

This nobility sprouts in the form of good aspiration and grows into a tender shoot as *vicharana* (reflection). Soon this tender shoot assumes the form of a robust tree of wisdom. This is *tanumanasi* (attenuation of the mind).

Whoever dies in the third state of wisdom enjoys astral joys of profound intensity and is born as a yogi. From his very childhood, he is led to meditation and *samadhi*. Impelled by his previous efforts, he attains Self-realization in a short time.

A yogi is said to be in a state of "wakefulness" during the first stages of wisdom. When the fourth state, known as *sattwapatti* (pervasion of purity), dawns, he sees the world as a "dream." His consciousness is characterized by increasing detachment from the projections of the world-process.

With the advent of the fifth state, he is said to enter into the state of "sleep." He falls asleep to the world. His penetrating vision does not dwell on the illusions fabricated by the ego-ridden mind; rather, it abides in the intuitive revelation that "All is *Brahman*." The world sustained by mental limitations is seen like dissolving mist before the dazzling rays of the sun.

During the sixth state, known as *padarthabhavana* (the absence of matter), he is, as it were, dead to the world. In the seventh, the world vanishes completely from his view. He is neither “asleep” to it, nor “dead” to it. This is the state of *videha mukti*—liberation in life—which cannot be described in words.

Section 127—*Sage Valmiki Summarizes the Teachings for His Disciple Bharadwaja*

After listening to the illuminating talk of Sage Vasistha, Sri Rama entered into profound *samadhi*. He enjoyed the bliss of the Self. Meanwhile, in the course of listening to *Yoga Vasistha* from Sage Valmiki, Bharadwaja expressed great wonder regarding that state of liberation. He wanted to know how a person like himself, who was not an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, could attain that state of liberation.

Bharadwaja asked: O preceptor, Sri Rama was a great yogi. He was the incarnation of the supreme Divinity—Lord Vishnu. He enacted the drama of being an aspirant only to promote spiritual wisdom in the world. There is no wonder that he rested in His Divine Self after listening to the teachings of Sage Vasistha.

O Guru, what methods should I adopt in order to attain Self-realization? What should those who are not endowed with the ideal state of purification do to attain liberation?

Sage Valmiki replied: This world is sustained by ignorance. It arises due to impure *vasanas* (subtle desires). It

exists like a long dream from which one must wake up to realize one's essential Divine Nature.

Those who lack discrimination are overcome by sudden elation and depression due to the varying conditions of the world, but one who is endowed with wisdom continues to rejoice at all times. If at all he shows any negative manifestations, he is only acting like the ignorant in order to communicate with them.

It is due to obstructions created in past lives that one is unable to discover one's essential nature. The impressions of virtuous and vicious karmas do not allow a person to grasp the subtle implications of spiritual teachings. Therefore, you must worship the Lord of the Universe (the Divine Self) to receive His grace.

As long as your mind is not purified, you must develop devotion towards God in His *saguna-sakara* aspect (God as a person and with attributes). When your mind is purified, you will automatically meditate upon the formless Self.

By continuous practice of devotion to the Divine Self, you will gain the strength of *sattwa* (purity). Endowed with this spiritual strength, you will be able to control your mind and senses under the guidance of your guru.

Then you will enter into *samadhi* and discover your true essential nature. The dark night of the world-process will be transformed into the golden dawn of spiritual consciousness. One must seek the grace of God in order to perfect one's efforts towards Self-realization. Without Divine grace, mere egoistic effort is of no value.

O child, when you develop dispassion towards the objects of the world, your virtuous acts become your friends. They purify your heart and prepare you for the lofty attainment of Self-realization. But, when you lack dispassion, your virtuous acts become your enemies by creating increasing attachment to the objects of the world.

If you want to do the greatest good to yourself, you should become devoted to the practice of listening, reflection and meditation on *Brahman*. As you are attached to the objects of the world, you will be unable to develop devotion to *Brahman*.

The world swings with varying conditions. There is no need for you to become involved in the experiences of sweetness and bitterness. The external conditions of union and separation are mere sports created by the *Maya* of the Divine Self.

A wise person does not grieve for petty objects of the world. He realizes the transitoriness of all objects, and therefore, turning away from them, abides in the supreme peace of *Atman*. Give up the objects of the world, which are inauspicious, and direct your mind to the sublime heights of spiritual reflection.

Bharadwaja said: I have understood, O Sage, that the secret of all spiritual disciplines lies in the development of *vairagya* (dispassion). There is no friend greater than *vairagya*, which takes one across the ocean of the world-process. There is no enemy worse than this world-process that keeps the soul revolving in the cycles of birth and death.

Now I wish to listen to the essence of the teachings given by Sage Vasistha to Sri Rama. This will indeed enable me to save myself from drowning in the ocean of the world-process.

Sage Valmiki said: Adorations to that supreme Self who is *sat-chit-ananda* (existence, knowledge and bliss absolute)! That *Brahman* is one and yet manifests in diverse forms due to the force of *Maya*. I will tell you how this world can be dissolved into Pure Consciousness.

First you should reflect upon the Divine nature of the Self. In this process, you should be guided by the study of scriptures and good association with sages and saints. With the lamp of intuitive intellect, which shines with the light of dispassion, you will be able to discover your essential nature. Thus discovering, you will cross the ocean of sorrow.

Section 128—*The Path of Laya Yoga and Sri Rama's Awakening*

Sage Valmiki continued: O Bharadwaja, an aspirant must endow himself with these spiritual qualities—serenity, control of senses, and renunciation of selfishness. While seated on a soft mat in a steady pose, he should continue repeating *Om* until the mind is filled with cheerfulness.

Then he should practise *pranayama* in order to purify his heart, and learn the art of withdrawing the senses from the objects of the world.

Gradually, he should attempt the method of merging the effect into its cause, until all these names and forms are merged in their underlying substratum—the Divine Self.

He should meditate upon the implication of the letter “A” of *Om* (A+U+M) in the following manner:

“A” represents *Virat* Consciousness—the Consciousness that identifies itself with the entire physical universe. He should assert within himself, “I am this *Virat* Self. I am all that exists in this physical universe.”

Then he should merge *Virat* Consciousness into *Hiranyagarbha* Consciousness (Cosmic Mind). The Cosmic Mind is symbolized by the letter “U” of *Om*. It is the totality of all subtle bodies that are constituted of the mind and senses. It is the Cosmic Mind that projects this physical world. Therefore, by the force of one’s understanding, one should see the whole world arising from and dissolving into the Cosmic Mind (*Hiranyagarbha*). He should meditate thus: “I am the Cosmic Mind. I enfold in my consciousness all the subtle bodies—all the minds and senses of all beings.”

Then he should merge *Hiranyagarbha* Consciousness into *Avyakrita* Consciousness (Causal Consciousness) by meditating upon, “I am the indefinable cause. I am the *Maya* which is the basis of all that exists.” This is the meditation on the letter “M” of *Om*.

Finally he should merge *Avyakrita* Consciousness into *Brahman* Consciousness, which is symbolized by the forth

letter of *Om*, which is termed as *ardha matra* (half a syllable) and is expressed in silence alone. Thus, he realizes the full significance of *Om*; he realizes *Brahman*—the absolute Reality behind the illusion of the world.

This process of merging the effect into its cause is further elaborated in the following instructions:

The earth element should be merged in the water element. Water should be merged in fire, and fire in the air element. The air element should be merged in the ether element from which it has evolved.

There is yet another method. The senses should be merged in their presiding deities. The ear is merged in the deities of the directions. The sense of touch is merged in the deity of lightning. The eye is merged in the sun and taste is merged in the deity of waters—Varuna.

Pranas are to be merged in the wind god and the subtle organ of action that operates through the hands is to be merged in Divine Indra. The organ of action operating through the feet are to be merged in Lord Vishnu. Similarly all organs of action must be merged in their respective deities.

An aspirant should feel, "These organs do not belong to me. They are the emanations of the Cosmic Deity. They must be offered back to Him."

In fact, the gods (the emanations of the Self) exist in the human personality in the disguise of the *indriyas* (senses of perception and organs of action) and *pranas* (vital forces).

There is no independent existence for any part of one's personality. A human personality is just a wave in the ocean of the Self. By renouncing the egoistic vision which creates the sense of "mine-ness" and "thine-ness," thus giving rise to the illusion of multiplicity in this homogeneous existence of the Self, one realizes one's identity as *Brahman* (the absolute Self).

This entire creation is sustained by the Divine Self in the form of Lord Shiva and His energy—Parvati Devi. In fact, Shiva and His consort, Parvati, represent *Brahman* and *Prakriti* or *Maya*. When one attains union with the Divine Self, he rises beyond *Prakriti* (*Maya* or *Avyakrita*) and merges in the non-dual Self.

Bharadwaja said: O Sage, I have become liberated from the chains of the causal body. I am a wave of Pure Consciousness. I have now entered into the ocean of Consciousness.

Just as fire merges in fire, or salt merges in the salty ocean, so I merge in *Brahman*. Just as milk merges in milk, or water merges in water, so I merge in *Brahman*, Who is full of bliss, the supreme Cause of all that exists, and Who is Pure Consciousness.

I am eternal, all-pervading, peaceful, taintless, The embodiment of truth, indivisible and immutable *Brahman*. I am beyond all limitations of virtue and vice, pleasure and pain, gain and loss. I am the Light of all lights.

Thus should an aspirant meditate until his mind merges in *Brahman*. When the mind dissolves in *Brahman*, like the

mist before the rising sun, one attains the realization of *Brahman*. Consequently, the dark night of misery is removed forever.

Pleased with the utterances of his disciple, Sage Valmiki said:

It is true, O Bharadwaja, you should abide in *Brahman*, since now you have abandoned all distractions of the mind caused by egoistic desires.

You should perform only those actions that will enable you to develop increasing devotion to *Brahman*. Then you will gradually rise beyond the limitations of the mind, and will attain perfection.

Go beyond the three states of consciousness (waking, dream and deep sleep), and rest in the transcendental *Brahman*. Since as an individual you are bound to sink (in the world-process through repeated cycles of birth and death), then why not sink in the ocean of nectar—*Brahman*?

Develop intense devotion to the Divine Self. Listen to the scriptural teachings. Reflect upon the meanings by following the guidance of a spiritual preceptor. You should constantly try to direct your mind to *Brahman*. Thus, you will attain the fruit of your self-effort—you will attain Self-realization. This is the essence of the *Vedic* teachings.

Bharadwaja asked: O Sage, Sri Rama attained union with *Brahman* after he discarded all the limiting adjuncts of the Self. But how did Sri Vasistha bring him back to normal

consciousness so that he could maintain the practical realities of his world?

Sage Valmiki replied: O Bharadwaja, seeing Sri Rama resting in his Divine nature, Sage Vishwamitra told Vasistha:

O Sage Vasistha, you are indeed a great preceptor. You have proven your preceptorship most adequately. A guru is one who can awaken Divine Consciousness in his disciple by his mere presence, or by his touch, or by his speech. You are endowed with infallible will.

Sri Rama is also a great aspirant. Enlightenment in an aspirant arises when his heart is cleared of all its impurities. If an aspirant is not prepared by the cultivation of spiritual qualities, he cannot receive enlightenment in spite of the presence of great personalities.

Spiritual wisdom arises when there is the conjunction of an ideal guru with an ideal disciple. The conjunction of a guru like you and a disciple like Sri Rama is indeed rare to find.

However, if Sri Rama continues to be immersed in *samadhi*, the purpose for which I have come here will not be fulfilled. Therefore, be gracious, and awaken him to normal consciousness. He must fulfill the purpose of His Divine incarnation.

With my guidance, Sri Rama will destroy demons and will release Ahalya from a curse. He will break the bow of

Shiva and will marry the daughter of Janaka — Sita. He will defeat Parashurama, who is the son of Sage Jamadagni.

With the pretext of obeying his father, he will go to abide in the forests. Since he is enlightened, however, he will roam fearlessly, and will protect the sages and saints from terrible demons. According to the Divine Plan, Sita will be abducted by Ravana, the King of Demons, and Sri Rama will exhibit the miseries of a man who is attached to his loving wife.

Then he will raise an army of monkeys and bears, and having bridged the ocean, he will destroy the demon king along with numerous demons. He will revive the monkeys who perish by receiving a boon from Indra. Indra will shower nectar on all the monkeys who will be killed in that great battle.

He will bring out the Divine glory of Sita by allowing her to prove her purity by entering into fire. Then he will return to Ayodhya, and rule his kingdom as an ideal king. He will engage himself in the performance of various ritualistic sacrifices in order to set an example for those who must evolve through the performance of karma (sacrifices, or any action performed to purify the heart).

Through his lofty, exemplary life, he will teach humanity to follow the path of *dharma* (righteousness) by combining karma (selfless action) with *upasana* (devout meditation on God). Not only will he purify and enlighten the people of his own time, he will create a Divine basis for all people to attain liberation at all times.

Whoever studies the story of Rama, or remembers his deeds, or listens to his glories, or relates his story to others will receive the grace of Rama and, thereby, will be led to *jivanmukti*—liberation in life.

May you all adore Sri Rama. If you adore Him, you will not need any other means for attaining liberation. If you conquer Him with love, he will bestow on you the highest fruit of existence—the state of liberation.

Sage Valmiki continued: After listening to Sage Vishwamitra's speech, all the sages and great personalities in the audience adored Sri Rama mentally. Sage Vasistha too became immersed in adoring the lotus feet of Rama with intense devotion.

Sage Vasistha said: O Sage Vishwamitra, please explain to us the purpose of the Divine birth of Sri Rama. Tell us, is he an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, or is he a normal human being?

Sage Vishwamitra answered: Sri Rama is indeed an incarnation of Lord Vasudeva (Divine Vishnu). To promote righteousness and remove sinfulness, he has incarnated in this world. He is beyond the reach of even the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*.

When pleased by devotion, Sri Rama can bestow upon a person the highest goal of life. When angered, he can destroy the whole world. He is the creator of this illusory world. He is the sustainer as well as the destroyer of this world-process.

Sri Rama exists in four forms: *jnana mukta* (liberated through wisdom), *nitya mukta* (eternally liberated), *Maya niyaman* (the controller of *Maya*) and *baddha* (bound by His own *Maya*). In fact, He is beyond the three *gunas*.

He is Vishnu, the sustainer of the universe. He is Brahma, the creator of the world. He is Shiva, the supreme destroyer.

Victory is borne by valor, and liberation is borne by aspiration. In the same way, Lord Rama is borne by Garuda, the mystic bird, unto his infinite expansion.

King Dasharatha is indeed blessed to have had a son like Rama. And his brother, Lakshmana, is the very embodiment of the mystic serpent, Shesha (the Cosmic Mind). O Sage Vasistha, please awaken Rama to his normal state of consciousness so that he may commence his Divine activities. Thus saying, Sri Vishwamitra became silent.

Sage Vasistha said to Rama: O Rama, this is not the time for you to become absorbed in your Divine nature. Please wake up and stay in this world for a few days. Become a source of joy for this world.

Sri Valmiki said: While he was saying this, Sage Vasistha, through his mental will, entered into the astral body of Sri Rama. He ascended through his *Sushumna Nadi*, and reached the region of the heart. There he awakened Rama's soul from its causal sleep. Just as a seed is awakened to its sprouting stage, so Rama was awakened from that state of causal absorption. After he composed

himself and adjusted to the realities of the world, Sri Rama spoke inspired words.

Sri Rama said: O Sage, I have attained all that is to be attained. By your grace, I need no more instructions. I am myself the Divine *Brahman*.

However, I will conduct myself according to the instructions of my guru—Sage Vasistha. All the scriptures proclaim the glory of obeying the commands of one's guru. Then Sri Ramachandra placed his head on the lotus feet of Sage Vasistha, and offered his profound devotion to his guru.

Sri Rama said: Please listen to my proclamation. There is nothing greater than spiritual wisdom, and no one greater than the guru who imparts it.

The celestial beings applauded Sri Rama in agreement with his proclamation.

Sage Valmiki said: O Bharadwaja, all the celestial beings showered flowers on Rama and departed to their abodes.

Whoever studies this supremely enlightening dialogue between Sri Rama and Sage Vasistha will attain freedom from all afflictions. Whoever comments on these teachings and enables others to listen to this great wisdom will become free from all limitations and attain Self-realization. Ordinary aspirants who listen to these teachings will be-

come free from mental impurities. Qualified aspirants will attain the goal of life in a short time by studying, reflecting and meditating upon the import of these teachings.

**Thus ends the
Purvardha of Nirvana Prakarana.**



Section 1 — *Eradication of Desire in a Jivan Mukta*

Having been awakened from the state of profound *samadhi*, Sri Rama realized the need of maintaining his practical life for fulfilling the Divine plan of his incarnation. Therefore, for doing good to the world of spiritual seekers, he asked the following question.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, how is it possible for a liberated sage to maintain his life in this day to day world if he is devoid of all desires? Shouldn't his body fall without any sustenance?

Sage Vasistha explained: O Rama, only one who is alive can overcome his imaginations. A person devoid of life cannot attain the state of desirelessness. The ideal of renunciation is not opposed to one's life. Listen to the reasons for this.

The erroneous notion that the physical body is the Self is termed *kalpana* or imagination. This imagination must be overcome by allowing the mind to flow towards the understanding that the Self is limitless and transcendental. This movement of the mind is characterized by *kalpana-tyaga* (abandonment of imagination).

Identification with the limited objects of the world is the result of *kalpana*. When the mind discovers the true identity of the Self in the form of eternal and infinite *Brahman*, it is called renunciation of imagination.

A living person alone can renounce his illusions. The process of self-effort can attain its consummation only in a living person.

The recollection of objects of the world in one's consciousness is called *samkalpa* (the mind tinged with egoistic willing), but the loss of memory of the world due to intuitional enlightenment is called *Shiva*—the Absolute Good. One remembers things that are previously experienced as well as those that are not experienced previously. The mind continues to create the concepts of the known and the unknown. During dream one continues to remember things never experienced before.

The recognition of the world is due to the "long dream" in which the individual soul, overpowered by ignorance, is involved. When there arises intuitional awakening, the individual soul does not remember the world any more.

O Rama, let your vision rise beyond the remembered and not-remembered objects of the world. You must rise beyond the ego-dominated functions of the mind and realize that you are *Brahman*, the Absolute. I emphatically declare that the renunciation of *samkalpa* is the way to supreme blessedness.

O what a great illusion! Although everyone is endowed with the wish-yielding gem of intellect, they are unable to use that intellect towards the discovery of their own essential nature.

When one rises beyond the seer and the seen, he becomes free from all *samkalpas* (imagination and egoistic willings). This is indeed your supreme goal of life. Having attained this, even the glory of *Hiranyagarbha* (Cosmic Mind) becomes as insignificant as a straw.

When a person returns home his steps continue to move onward with great spontaneity. His mind continues to relax because he is returning home. He does not need to keep his mind agitated by the constant will to move on. Much in the same way, the Godward journey of the soul is characterized by increasing spontaneity.

A sage continues to perform his day to day duties of life on the basis of his fructifying karmas of the past. Though performing actions, he enjoys the profound state of "sleepless sleep." He is like a person who, though enjoying deep sleep, is still able to drive flies or mosquitoes away from his face.

Just as a puppet controller enjoys the dance of the puppet without being identified with it, in the same way, a sage sports through his physical body without being attached to it.

With the sap of the world-process consumed by the scorching rays of wisdom, you perceive your personality —

consisting of mind, intellect, ego, senses and body—to be like a tree in the winter season that has withdrawn its sap to its deeper parts.

Exist without egoistic mentations even like the breeze, or a blazing fire, or a rippling stream. Thus, you will attain supreme blessedness.

Do not be attached to the fruits of action, nor be attached to the fruit of abandonment of actions. Thus rising beyond both, you must continue to perform your duties in daily life.

When *samkalpas* are renounced, the *chitta* ceases to exist under the domination of egoistic vision. This is described as yoga. In this state, the soul discovers its essential identity with the Divine Self.

With the effacement of egoistic vision, one attains that supreme Self, which is homogeneous, peaceful, supremely blessed, subtle, non-dual, all-pervading, infinite and eternal. How can he be lonely and dejected in this lofty state?

As long as your mind continues to sustain the erroneous notion of “I-ness” and “mine-ness,” so long the miseries of the world will not terminate for you.

O Rama, the sense of egoism is based upon ignorance. Ego does not exist as a reality. Therefore, there is no real trouble involved in renouncing the ego. When ignorance is destroyed, ego is effaced, the world is transcended, and the soul regains its supremely Divine nature, which is *Atman* or *Brahman*.

Section 2—*The World is Full of Shiva*

Sage Vasistha continued: The peaceful *Atman*, beyond the concepts of non-duality and duality, alone exists. Just as an army of earthen toy-soldiers are nothing but earth, in the same way, this world is nothing but *Brahman*.

The flow of time, the manifold patterns of form, the diverse activities of life, the names that we fondly cling to, the meanings that we find in the objects of the world, and even the thinking mind, rationalizing intellect and asserting ego, as well as the recollecting *chitta*, are nothing but *Brahman*—the Absolute.

With the advent of the monsoons of Divine vision, the dust clouds of the world-process are converted into the “mud” of the blessed Self—the Divine Shiva. Just as golden dust is nothing but gold, so too, the world is nothing but *Brahman*.

When the defective vision of I-ness and mine-ness is cured, you will abide in the unbounded silence of the Self, which is as immutable as the heart of a rock.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, what does a sage who has risen above the egoistic sense of I-ness and mine-ness gain by performing an action or lose by not performing it?

Sri Vasistha replied: Oh Rama, first please relate to me all that you know about karma and its root. Tell me, what must be destroyed in order to transcend this karmic tree, and how can this be accomplished?

Sri Rama answered: O Sage, I will relate to you my views on the basis of the teachings that I have received from you. The root of the karmic tree must be sought and destroyed. Attempts to cut off the branches will not be of any value.

Planted in the forest of the world-process, this human body is the karmic tree that has been extending from numerous past lives. The limbs of the body are the branches of this tree. Karma is the seed of this tree.

During the spring of youth, the tree glows with beauty; but with the advent of the winter of age, it assumes a frosty garb.

Time, like a violent monkey, continues to agitate this tree by creating the pranks of elation, dejection, disease, and other effects of the negative karmas of the past. This tree attracts to itself the weeds and grass of numerous attachments and involvements in the objects and relatives of the world.

The *karmendriyas* (organs of action) are the basis for this physical body. Because of the actions performed by the *karmendriyas*, a person becomes bound to a particular embodiment. However, the basis for the *karmendriyas* lies in the *jnanendriyas* (senses of perception).

With their roots in the muddy waters of the *vasanas* (subtle desires), the *jnanendriyas* or the senses move far and wide to grasp the objects of the world. However, they are conditioned by the karmas of the individual soul.

Further, the basis of the senses is the mind, which controls and regulates the functions of the senses. The mind has the inherent ability to permeate the whole universe. However, conditioned by karma, it restricts its operation through the senses in human personality. It receives the objects of the world through the five channels of the senses, and having enjoyed them, it rejects them.

The basis or the root of the mind is the individual soul, which is in reality the Self reflecting in the mind. The supreme Self, therefore, is the ultimate root of this karmic tree. This supreme Self or *Brahman* is infinite, eternal, pure and true. There is no basis for *Brahman*.

Consciousness is the basis for the performance of all karmas. When it becomes associated with the notion that "I am the performer of certain deeds," it assumes the role of becoming the seed of the karmic tree. Pure Consciousness associated with *avidya* (ignorance) is the seed that must be destroyed in order to eradicate the tree of karma.

Ignorance manifests in the form of identification with the body, which expresses itself in this affirmation, "I am this body." I have just briefly presented what I have summed up from your own instructions, O Sage.

Sri Vasistha, approving of what Sri Rama said, continued: This *jiva* consciousness experiences the world within itself due to its own illusory creations in the form of subtle desires, cravings, mentations, actions, and egoistic urges. Therefore, it is important to transcend the *chitta* itself by acquiring the knowledge of the Self. When the *jiva* con-

sciousness casts aside the limitation of *jivahood* or individuality, it discovers its essential nature as *Brahman*. The karmic tree is thus eradicated.

As long as this body exists, whether one is enlightened or not, the *chitta* continues to operate through this body. By stopping the functions of the body, the *chitta* cannot be renounced. But, by the force of wisdom, this *chitta* is transcended and renounced. Therefore, though a sage continues to perform actions led by the past momentum of his karma, he is ever established in the awareness that "I am the non-dual, associationless, immutable Self."

With the externalization of vision, there arises perception of the world-process. However, in intuitive vision, wherein the seer and seen are lost in the ocean of non-duality, there is the absolute transcendence of the world.

Section 3—*Eradication of the World-Process*

Sri Rama asked: O Lord of Sages, how can a perceptible object be rendered imperceptible? The real continues to exist; the unreal has no existence. How, then, is it possible to reject the knowable objects of the world?

Sri Vasistha explained: By the very fact that the real cannot be destroyed, and the unreal cannot ever exist, it is easy to negate that which is unreal and realize the Self which is real.

The objects that are perceived by the senses and their meanings that are evolved by the mind are like the super-

imposition of snake-in-rope. Just as an illusory appearance of a snake has nothing to do with the rope, in the same way, the meanings evolved by the mind on the basis of its limitation are not based upon the reality of the objects.

Further, the objects do not exist as they appear to the senses. Names and forms of objects are illusory. The Self that underlies them is the only reality.

In all forms of knowledge gained by the individual soul through the instrumentality of the mind, intellect, senses and ego, there exists a triad of seer, seen and sight. A wise yogi meditates upon the implications of *Om* and rises beyond the triad of the world-process. Thus, he attains the realization of the Self.

The knowledge that is refracted in the form of a subject-object relationship is intellectual and not intuitional. A yogi must renounce this limited form of knowledge, which is backed up by ignorance, and should seek intuitional knowledge, through which the seer enters into the depths of the seen and discovers its essential nature as *Brahman*.

When the knowing subject discards the mental illusions and penetrates the depths of the knowable objects, the vision of the soul rises beyond the subject-object relationship and discovers its infinite expansion. As long as one has not learned the art of rising beyond the egoistic vision of life, so long it seems difficult to render the knowable objects of the world devoid of meaning and significance.

Knowing the true nature of the Self, a wise aspirant should endeavor to destroy the tree of karma. He must realize that his innermost Self is supremely free from good and evil deeds.

Just as a bilwa fruit creates its pulp and seeds within itself, in the same way, the Self creates the illusion of a conditioned mind within itself. Through the limited mind, the Self reveals a world of subject-object relationships. This world exists within the Self at all times. Just as the dream, dreaming subject, and dream phenomena all exist within the person and are nothing but the same person, in the same way, all this is nothing but *Brahman*—the Absolute Self.

Just as liquidity is non-different from water and luminosity non-different from fire, in the same way, the world is non-different from *Brahman*.

Consciousness and whatever it illumines are non-different. The light of the Self and all that is revealed by it during one's dream are the same Self. The witnessing light within and all that is revealed in the waking world are nothing but the same *Brahman*. The serene light of Consciousness and the absence of the world that is revealed during deep sleep are nothing but the Absolute Self.

The physical body is an extension of the karmic tree. The root of this tree lies in the egoistic vision of life. The branches of this tree constitute the world-process. By the practice of the ego-transcending vision of the Self, this tree

is eradicated from its very root. Then, just as a storm becomes serene with the subsiding of its fury, in the same way, the world-process resolves itself in the serene expansion of the Self.

The negation of the reflected self (*chidabhasa*) does not constitute its annihilation because by negating the reflected self one discovers oneself as the Absolute Self. The illusion of individuality is lost in the ocean of universality. A river loses its limited identity in order to become one with the ocean.

Therefore, O Rama, just as a pebble is cast into the surging waters to be irrevocably lost, in the same way, cast out of your consciousness this entire world-process evolved by the *chidabhasa* (the reflected self) just as a mighty boar uproots a tender tree.

Abiding in the Self, a sage becomes free from all the *vikalpas* (egoistic thought-processes) of the mind. Though engaged in action, he is always abiding in the Self that is beyond all actions. Therefore, he neither performs an action, nor does he refrain himself from an action.

Just as straw, logs of wood, and other materials continue to float in a river, in the same way, the functions of the senses, mind, and organs of action continue to float in the consciousness of the sage who is absolutely unaffected by them.

When the bliss of Self is experienced, the mind's inclination towards the objects of pleasure becomes devoid

of all its nourishment. Just as a creeper withers away, the creeper of the desiring mind becomes lifeless without the sap of subtle desires that courses through it due to ignorance.

When a yogi realizes that state of consciousness which is free from objects and the subtle desires pertaining to them, and abides in the non-dual and peaceful Self, he is said to have renounced all karmas.

In this state, the mind gives up its chronic addiction to remembering the objects again and again. Just as things that have not been remembered for a very long time are practically lost to one's consciousness, in the same way, the world is forgotten and negated by the sage.

Those who do not attempt to destroy ignorance, but continue to renounce their physical actions, do not attain the goal of *karma-tyaga*—renunciation of action. The illusion of this renunciation, like an evil spirit, possesses them in order to destroy them.

That which is renounced from its very root is called real renunciation. On the other hand, that which maintains the root and renounces the branches is false renunciation.

Without removing the root, the karmic tree will continue to spread through numerous new branches, even though its branches may be cut down again and again.

Drunk, as it were, by the nectar of infinite bliss, a sage sees the world vanishing before his staggering vision. Even

an ordinary person forgets about his body due to his intense attachment towards the objects of the world—what to speak of a sage whose attachment is towards the very goddess of all prosperity in the form of liberation?

Though burned up by fire, a cloth continues to retain its shape. In the same way, karmic structure continues to maintain itself though its very fabric is burned up by the fire of wisdom.

Just as a wooden vessel continues to draw water from the well without any egoistic notion of performing a work, so too, a sage sees his senses performing work in a mechanical manner.

A person who has experienced the infinite peace of desirelessness finds every condition of life joyous. His very home becomes a quiet forest for him. He is the same in prosperity and adversity. However, one who is filled with desires finds a crowded situation even in a serene forest.

Section 4—*Eradication of the Ego-sense*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, when the Self is realized, the world-process is effaced along with its root—the ego-sense. When the oil is consumed, the flame in a lamp is extinguished. In the same way, when ignorance is destroyed by knowledge, the flame of the world-process is extinguished.

Renunciation of actions does not imply true renunciation. Rather, in the wisdom of the Self alone lies the secret

of renunciation. Men endowed with a miserly vision consider their bodies as themselves and objects of the world as their possessions.

Ignorance gives rise to identification with the physical body (*tadatmyadhyas*) and a sense of mine-ness towards the objects related to the body (*samsargadhyas*). With the destruction of ignorance, the ego-sense as well as the sense of mine-ness are effaced from one's consciousness.

When the vision of man rises beyond his ego, he realizes his essential identity with the Self. The world then becomes converted into *Brahman* or the Absolute.

When the ego-sense and its effect — the sense of possession — are destroyed, the world is destroyed. In fact, what is destroyed is only the illusion. The Reality behind the world is *Brahman*. The dispersal of clouds does not affect the sky. In the same way, the removal of the veil of ignorance does not affect the Self.

Like a hero wheeling his chariot through the battling forces, one must be ever vigilant to overcome the arrows discharged by the egoistic vision of the mind.

If one does not endeavor to overcome the ego-sense that is born of ignorance, he is not a hero. Rather, he is a dull-witted animal. If one is unable to conquer his inner enemies in the form of egoistic vision, desire, anger, greed and conceit, he is just a donkey in the shape of a man. But, whoever conquers these enemies by the increasing vision of the Self is truly a man of real accomplishments.

Whoever has conquered the movements of the mind or is attempting to conquer them is indeed a real man. He has acquired success in his human existence.

View whatever conditions arise in your life as the ocean would view its buried rocks and reefs. Do not develop the sense of mine-ness towards them. Continue to negate the illusion that "I am this body" and assert, "I am the non-dual Self." Thus you will become free from the world-process.

When the illusion of the snake is removed, the basis of illusion—which was a beautiful garland—now adorns one's neck. In the same way, when the illusion of the world is negated, the knowledge of the Self adorns the sage. The very same basis which was previously frightening now becomes the source of all joy.

The Self is the ever-present Reality. There is no rising and setting of the Self. When the triad of seer, seen and sight is transcended, the Self is realized as the non-dual, supremely peaceful, eternal Reality.

In human existence, one must endure various afflictions. Why, then, should a person be afraid of enduring the hardship caused by negating the ego-sense? In fact, what hardship is there in negating that which does not exist?

The vacuous vapor arising out of the breath robs a mirror of its transparency. In the same way, the empty vapor of vanity arising out of the vision of egoism taints the mirror of the mind. Thus, the Self is obscured and one enters into the awareness of the world-process.

O Sri Rama, when the ego-sense is negated, you become aware of that vision which overflows the mountains, the heavens, the earth, and the vast universe, and unites itself with the Cosmic Self. Thus, having negated the world-process, you abide in the realization, "All this is verily the Self."

Section 5—*The Need of Mastering the Senses*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, he who has controlled the senses along with the mind and is devoted to the cultivation of discrimination and dispassion is qualified to listen to the scriptures. The scriptures yield their true secrets for such a person.

One who has not controlled his mind and senses is in the possession of a dull intellect. Attaining liberation is as difficult for him as extracting oil out of desert sands.

The mind of one who is self-controlled is like a white sheet of cloth that can be easily colored by the teachings of the scriptures. But, the mind of one who is uncontrolled is like a mirror, which can reflect the teachings to a certain extent, but cannot admit them into its impervious and gross substance.

Once upon a time I had visited Sage Kakabhushundi (the Crow-Sage) at his *ashrama* in the solitary region of Mount Meru and asked him if he remembered anyone who lived a very long life of illusion.

Sage Kakabhushundi replied: O Sage, once there lived a celestial being I shall refer to as Vidyadhara on the

summits of the mountains. He was grieved at his uncontrolled senses. He had no peace of mind and was devoid of spiritual knowledge. However, he was endowed with virtuous qualities that enabled him to live a very long time.



He continued to live for four *kalpas*. During this long duration he practised various forms of austerities, observances, and restraints. As a result of these spiritual disciplines, he developed discrimination in his mind during the fourth *kalpa* of his life.

When his reason became subtle and discriminative intellect began to reveal itself, he entered into these reflections:

I am ashamed to experience a prolonged existence, seeing the unending repetition of birth, death, old age and diverse changing conditions in the world of living beings. Is there a state wherein the changes of the world are transcended?

Thus having reflected, Vidyadhara approached me. Having offered his devotional adorations, he described his mental condition thus:

Vidyadhara said: O Sage, the senses enter into their respective objects with great agility. Once they have entered, however, they become strongly fastened to the objects, and those ties cannot be destroyed by even the mightiest weapons.

Further, O Sage, these senses have their roots in the heart; therefore, they cannot be easily controlled. They are characterized by increasing *tamas* (inertia) and, therefore, they are like a forest inaccessible due to its density. Desire is the monkey that abounds in this forest. Different mentations are diverse animals that agitate this forest.

One can attain happiness only by controlling the senses and the mind. When the fire of spiritual knowledge is kindled this forest can be burned up. Therefore, I have approached your gracious self for receiving spiritual instructions.

The method of attaining liberation is so simple! All that one must do is negate the ego-sense within him by the understanding of the Reality of the Self. If this art is understood, there is no need for other difficult spiritual disciplines.

“I am not this body. I am Pure Consciousness.” If you say that even this affirmation is sustained by the mind and its limited concepts, it is not so. With this affirmation the mind and ego are transcended, and the Reality of the Self is intuitively experienced without dependence upon the mind and the senses.

Whenever the ego-sense rises within you, you must negate it by the exercise of your reason. Whatever causes the ego-sense to develop must be negated as well. In so doing, a person does not become a prey to grief.

Section 6—*Miseries That Arise due to Sense-indulgence*

Vidyadhara continued: O Sage, please instruct me regarding the Self, the knowledge of which destroys the contraction of the heart and bestows endless joy. So long I have been sleeping in the night of ignorance. Now with the increasing intensity of dispassion I have attained the wakeful state.

O Sage, I have been afflicted by the terrible disease of desire. I have experienced the intense agitation of the mind. My karmas are limitless. Therefore, please do thou save me from the ocean of the world-process.

Though I possess great psychic powers because of my very birth as a *vidyadhara*, I am devoid of mental peace. The possession of immense wealth and power does not enable a person to enjoy peace if the mind is constantly assailed by anger, desire, jealousy and other impurities.

Individual souls continue to experience repeated births and deaths. They are like mosquitoes in a lotus bloom. They do not endeavor to attain *dharma* (righteousness) and *moksha* (liberation).

We have been deceived by the senses for a very long time. The objects of enjoyment seem delightful in the beginning, but they perish in a moment. They are so insecure, changing and fickle.

I have enjoyed all that the senses can present. I have sported in the heavenly gardens. I have delighted in the company of heavenly women. I have experienced great acquisitions of power in the midst of the celestial army. In spite of all these enjoyments, I am being consumed by the poisonous agony of the mind.

I have understood the illusion behind the pleasures of the senses. The beauty of body is shallow and empty. It is the *raga* (attachment)-dominated mind that is unable to see the vanity in the objects of the world.

The urge to smell fragrant materials drives a person as though he were riding on a mad horse. It has confined the soul to a cell of flesh and blood. One continues to breathe in and out, smelling the foul stench of flesh and blood.

Driven by the tongue I have wandered on various tasty objects of the world. I have been driven to a mountain of misery abounding with the deceitful jackals and foxes of impure mentations.

The urge for touch drives one to those desert lands wherein the sun is scorching hot, and the desire for melodious songs and sweet words forces one to be trapped in mysterious entanglements, even like the deer that are trapped by music.

The objects of the world are enjoyed again and again by the ignorant, but for me they have become like "vomited stuff." My mind is filled with increasing distaste for the objects of the world.

What can a person gain by the diverse enjoyments of the world? There were great kings and monarchs who did not achieve anything of lasting value from this transient world.

Is there anything that one can attain that frees him from all desires? What is that which, having been attained, all is attained?

Those who are ready to conquer the vast army of the senses are the real heroes in this world. This army abounds

with the elephants of passion, swords of greed, violent weapons of anger, and chariots of *dwandwas* (pairs of opposites, such as heat and cold), and diverse activities which are like the tumult of the horses.

Those who are masters of their senses and mind are indeed truly prosperous men in this world. Others are dolls of flesh and blood, manipulated by the strings of desires.

Without renouncing expectations for the enjoyments of the world, one cannot remedy the disease of the senses. There is no other medicine or method for curing the senses.

The senses are like small pits full of mud and filth. It is despicable for a person to remain confined to their charms. The senses are further compared to inaccessible forests abounding with insensitivity and illusion.

They are like hollow reeds with joints of vanity. They are like the salty ocean which is unable to satisfy a thirsty soul.

They are the shadows of death. It is by depending upon the senses that one experiences misery due to death of relatives.

They are like a solitary forest, which is friendly to the man of discrimination but unfriendly to the man that is steeped in ignorance. They are like dark clouds with empty flashes of illusory pleasure, which are followed by the torrential rains of misery.

They are like demons that are constantly engaged in devouring the ignorant. They are like a city abounding with thieves, robbers, gamblers, and criminals.

Thus, I am sinking in the ocean of misery caused by the uncontrolled senses. Please save me from being drowned in the world-process. O Sage, instruct me regarding the nature of the Self.

Section 7—*The Tree of the World-process Rising from the Seed of Ego*

Sage Kakabhushundi said: O Lord of Vidyadharas, it is a matter of great delight that you have been awakened from the slumber of ignorance. You have developed aspiration for releasing yourself from the dark well of the world-process.

I am sure your purified intellect will understand my teachings without any effort. I am going to teach you that which I have discovered after a long process of enquiry and reflection.

Whatever appears in the form of objectivity, including your ego, mind and senses, is not your innermost Self. Do not look for your essential identity in the world of objects. Even if you were to look for the Self in the midst of the objects for a long time you will not succeed.

Consider the whole world of objectivity as an expression of ignorance. You are the witnessing light. There is neither I nor you nor the world of objects. Be established in

this understanding that all this is Shiva. The world is neither for your pleasure nor for your pain. It is, in reality, the Divine Self.

During deep sleep, ignorance is experienced in a dense form. During dream and waking states of consciousness, ignorance assumes a world of duality and multiplicity. When a variety of different golden ornaments are melted, they become a unified mass of gold. However, when a mass of molten gold is moulded into different patterns, it assumes different names and forms. In the same way, all that is experienced during the dream and waking states are merely different names and forms of the mass of ignorance that is experienced during sleep.

The Self that illumines ignorance and its effects is the Absolute Reality on which the phenomena of dream and waking are projected. When ignorance is destroyed, the world of relativity vanishes from one's view.

This world is like a mirage—nonexistent from the point of view of water and existent from the point of view of the desert. Even so, this world is nonexistent from the point of view of the objects and their realities, but existent from the point of view of *Brahman* or the Absolute.

Ego is the seed of the world-tree. This tree of the world-process, which encompasses the mountains, oceans, rivers and lands, has arisen out of the seed of ego. This tree is being nourished by the sap of attachment. Subtle desires are its buds. The full moon is a blooming flower. Numerous stars and planets are within the branches of this tree.

Time, with its various ramifications of ages and years, exists like an army of worms eating into the tree. This tree arises on the ground of ignorance. Individual souls are like birds dwelling on this tree.

An aspirant must burn the seed of this tree by the development of detachment from his very ego. This spiritual sense of egolessness is the fire that destroys the world-tree. In the case of one who is liberated in life, the seed of the ego is, as it were, scorched; it cannot give rise to the tree of the world-process. Consequently, there is no more rebirth for the soul. It merges in *Brahman*—the Absolute Self.

Section 8—*The World is a Vast Temple* *Created by Samkalpa*

Sage Kakabhushundi continues: O Vidyadhara, just as a jeweler knows the worth of a precious stone by his keen observation, in the same way, a wise man discovers the reality of the Self underlying all names and forms by his intuitive vision. This intuitive vision burns up the seed of the world-tree in the form of ego.

As long as one maintains the ego-sense, adhering to the body and other objects of the world, so long the seed of the world-process continues to exist. But, when one discovers egolessness everywhere, this seed is destroyed. This is true wisdom.

The world did not exist even in the beginning of creation. How can there be a valid existence for ego and its

relationships? The world of duality is sustained by illusion alone.

An aspirant must be guided by a spiritual preceptor for attaining the art of renouncing the *samkalpas* (egoistic willings) of the mind. A person who wishes to learn the art of preparing delicious food must study under the guidance of an expert cook. In the same way, an aspirant must learn the art of practising yoga and attaining the ascending horizons of spiritual consciousness.

This world is a miracle of Consciousness. It is a magic show sustained by the mental illusions. If fact, apart from the Self or Consciousness, there is no reality in anything in this world.

The world is like a vast temple created by the *samkalpas* of the mind. This temple has thousands of jeweled pillars. Its walls are adorned by the mighty mountains and deep oceans. Its roof is adorned by the endless profundities of space. The sun, moon, stars and celestial luminaries are the lamps that illumine the temple.

Various living beings of the world are like painted pictures on the walls of the temple for the amusement of Mother Prakriti—Divine Nature.

The sky itself is a table in this vast temple for a chess game in which the whole world is created and destroyed again and again for the pleasure of the mysterious divine players. The sun, moon and stars are like the pieces in this chess game.

This great temple is destroyed when the Self does not involve itself with the illusions of *samkalpas*. By renouncing the desires and egoistic willings of the mind, the world-process is effaced from one's consciousness.

A sage who has attained desirelessness does not accept or reject actions in his day to day life. He continues to perform his daily activities without expectations for a future development. With the termination of his bodily existence, he is not born anymore.

Section 9—*The World is Nothing but Pure Consciousness*

Sage Kakabhushundi continued: O Vidyadhara, having renounced the memory of all objects and their relationships, abide in the stainless expansion of Pure Consciousness. Like the rays of the sun that enter into the water, you have entered into the world-process. Discover your essential luminosity.

The world abides in Consciousness like mirage in a desert. It consists of illusion; therefore, it cannot taint the Self. The world is an illusory modification of the Self.

The ego-sense in you is illumined by the Self. Therefore, abide in that light which illumines the ego-sense or the ego-thought. Do not be identified with the wave of the ego-thought, but discover yourself as the illuminer of it. Thus, you will rise beyond the limitations of the ego and abide in the transcendental expansion of the Self.

You are like the vast ocean without internal and external differentiations. Let the ego-wave be transcended with the rising of the experience of the ocean-like fullness of the Self.

This world, consisting of inert and conscious objects, is nothing but illusory modifications of the Divine Self. All this is within yourself. Therefore, do as you will; whether you abide in *samadhi*, negating the perceptions of the world, or exist in the world, negating the attachments of the mind.

The difference that exists between an ignorant person and an enlightened person is clarified by the following example. An ignorant person seeing a mirage imagines that his movement is being obstructed by a river. He stops his onward journey. A sage also sees the mirage, but he knows that its waters are illusory. Therefore, he continues to move on, abiding in the transcendental realization of the Self.

Section 10—*The World Does Not Exist*

Sage Kakabhushundi continues: This world, which appears as different from the Conscious Self, is in fact the emanation of Consciousness itself. The inertness of the world exists in the Consciousness of the Self, like foam in water.

There is no real cause for the creation of this world. Therefore, this world does not exist in reality. It appears like mirage in a desert.

O Vidyadhara, you are vast like the sky. You are the embodiment of Pure Consciousness. Therefore abide in your essential nature, which is beyond the intellect and the reflected self (the individual soul).

It is impossible for *Brahman* to enter into the process of causation. Without the existence of a cause, it is impossible for the creation to manifest itself. In fact, this creation is nothing but the Absolute Self.

When the intellect is rendered subtle and penetrating, one does not see the existence of the ego-sense. Egoism vanishes when one enquires into the validity of its existence. This world and *Brahman* are in fact the same. Just as a golden necklace is one with the gold metal, in the same way, this world is the same as its true metal — *Brahman*.

Section 11—*Control of the Senses for Negating the World-process*

Though surrounded by the tempting objects of the senses, a wise man is not distracted. Until this state is reached, an aspirant must continue to control his senses. It is impossible to develop the thought of *Brahman* without mastering the senses.

As long as one does not abide in the Self that is beyond the world of multiplicity, one must continue to master the senses. As a result of mastery of the senses, the intellect

recovers its subtlety and is able to negate the reality of the world-process.

When the world is negated by intuitive vision, a sage is not affected by adversities presented by the world. Even conditions of great sorrow do not affect a sage. He is like a lotus, untouched by the water.

Just as the worms that grow in a poisonous substance are themselves poisonous, in the same way, the world arising out of *Brahman* is *Brahman* in reality. The soul is not different from *Brahman*.

This ocean of the world-process is easily crossed over when the intellect is rendered subtle by the practice of self-control, listening to the expositions of the scriptures, reflection upon the nature of the Self, and intense meditation on the innermost *Atman*. Then, the world-process becomes like a small pit full of water created by a cow's hoof.

Just as you see houses, objects, and stones existing outside of you, in the same way, you must view the ego-sense, intellect, mind and senses existing outside of your inner Self, like clouds in the vast sky.

Be a witness to all the functions of the body, mind, intellect, senses and ego. You are not touched by them. You are like the vast sky, eternal, infinite, and free. Having attained this state you will not be affected by prosperity or adversity. You will not develop the sense of actorship and enjoyership.

Section 12—*The Ego-sense Is Illusory*

Sage Kakabhushundi continued: Like sky arising out of the sky, so is this world that has proceeded from *Brahman*. In fact, *Brahman* alone exists. The world has no reality. It is the faulty vision of the ego that sees differences and multiplicities in the expansion of the Self.

Even the sky cannot match the subtlety of *Brahman*. Though the sky seems to be the subtlest object in the world, compared to the subtlety of *Brahman* it is as gross as a mountain contrasted with the subtlety of the atom-like *Brahman*.

Subtler than the physical ether is the realm of ignorance or *avidya*. The supremely subtle *Brahman*, identified with the functions of the mind, imagines the reality of the world within Itself.

The Self does not experience pleasure or pain. It is the reflected self in the intellect which imagines itself involved in the world of objects. The Self is a mere witness to all the functions of the mind, intellect and senses.

The Self is untouched by worry, grief, shame, elation, fear, memory and glorification. In the state of intuitive vision one does not see the reality of the objects. Just as it is difficult to see the feet of a snake on a dark night, in the same way, it is impossible to perceive the reality of the objects after the dawning of intuitive vision.

The world, when seen as objective to oneself, seems inert; but when it is seen through intuitive vision, it is nothing but Pure Consciousness.

When a person develops spiritual aspiration and comes under the guidance of a sage, half of his ignorance in the form of *mala* or impurity of the mind is destroyed forthwith. When he practises listening, reflection and meditation, he overcomes distraction of the mind, which is one-fourth of ignorance. When intuitive vision dawns through *samadhi*, he has overcome even the last quarter of ignorance.

Section 13—*Cosmos within an Atom*

Sage Kakabhushundi continued: O Vidyadhara, the rising of the world-process does not depend upon the reality of time and space. The luminous rays of the sun do not need pillars in the sky to support them.

Like fragrance in the breeze, this world exists in the Self. It is devoid of reality and is a mere creation of the mind.

Even the example of fragrance is not perfect. Compared to the subtlety of the Self, fragrance is as gross as Meru Mountain. The world is like dreams existing in the mind. An ancient story is told to illustrate this point.

Once upon a time, in the mysterious tree of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion) there developed a gular fruit of a cosmos. This fruit was different from other fruits. It contained the heavens, earth, mountains and oceans as its outer covering, and was swarmed by the mosquitoes of numerous beings—animals, birds, men and gods. This fruit smiled with wisdom, and encased within itself the five sheaths and the five elements as its internal structure. The stars constituted the

shining dew drops upon its surface. It was meant to be ripened by time, or eaten up by the intuitive vision of the yogis. It was meant to be reduced to *Brahman* from whence it arose.

Within this gular fruit, there dwelt the king of gods, Indra, like a queen bee in the midst of bees. He received spiritual wisdom from his guru.

In course of time he was defeated by the valiant demons. Chased by his enemies, he hid himself in an atom that scintillated in the rays of the sun. He was able to enter the heart of the atom by the power of his mind. There he rested for a while; but, in course of time, he found a world existing within that atom.

Within his imagined home, he saw an imagined world teeming with living beings and abounding with mountains, rivers, cities and villages. He found different worlds existing within that atom. By the power of his *samkalpa* (will) he felt himself to be the king of the three worlds that existed within the atom.

In course of time, Indra gave up his life as the flame of *vasanas* became extinct. His son, Kunda, became the ruler of the heavenly worlds existing within the atom.

Section 14—*Story of the World within an Atom*

Sage Kakabhushundi continued: In the line of Indra, there arose a powerful and prosperous personality. He

possessed his body for the last time because he had attained enlightenment.

He fought with demons and conquered them. He performed great sacrifices. On one occasion, he had to hide himself in a lotus stalk. Therein he experienced a vast world projected by his mind. He continued to witness victory and defeat and various conditions of life within that lotus-stalk.

Driven by the force of wisdom, he desired to gaze at the vastness of the Absolute. He practised meditation and exercised his intuitive gaze to explore the vastness of the Divine Self.

He saw the entire universe filled with the Divine Being with numerous hands, feet, faces, eyes and ears. That Divine Being, though existing in the realm of transcendence, was the enjoyer of all enjoyments. Though devoid of qualities, he was the possessor of all qualities.

He was of the nature of Pure Consciousness, vast like the ether, ever-free, and all-pervading.

Having entered into profound meditation, Indra within the atom was able to view the world-system from which his great-great-grandfather had withdrawn himself and had entered into an atom.

Having seen this, this Indra developed the will of becoming Indra of the world from which the initial Indra had proceeded. By the force of the purity of his thought, he became Indra of that universe, as well as remained the Indra of the universe within the atom.

Indra was able to discover the mysterious workings of *Maya* by the force of his intuitive vision. He saw how every atom within the universe was sustained by the same Self, and thus, it was possible to discover an entire universe within every atom. He discovered that there was a world within the world. Thus, there existed innumerable creations illumined by the light of the Self.

O Vidyadhara, such is the vastness of *Maya* or Cosmic Illusion. By the clouded vision of the ego-sense, there develops the mist of illusion, which spreads out into the world-process.

Ego-sense is the atom in which the world expands on the basis of illusion. The soul is essentially the lord of all creations maintained by the ego. Therefore, by the force of wisdom the soul discovers its lordliness over the world sustained by the ego. At the same time, it goes beyond the world within the atom to discover its identity with the Divine Self, who is the Lord of Cosmic Illusion. Such is the state of *jivan mukti* (liberation in life). A sage is aware of the world within his ego-sense, as well as the world that transcends all mentations. When his karmas become extinct, he becomes one with *Brahman*.

Section 15—*Ego—the Seed of the World-process*

Sage Kakabhushundi continued: O Vidyadhara, wherever there is ego, there is the world-process. The ego can create the illusion of the world-process even within a minute atom.

On the mountain of *Brahman* there lies the forest of the non-manifest (*Maya*), where the ego-seed is nourished by the water of subtle desires. Consequently, there arises the tree of the world-process (consisting of the three worlds—physical, astral and causal).

The great ocean of the ego gives rise to the dancing waves of the world-process. Numerous mountains, through which the waves swirl and foam, are the prosperities and adversities that abound in this world.

Just as clouds pour down torrential rains, so too, ego-consciousness gives rise to the rain of the world-process, from which stars proceed like tiny raindrops.

This world exists like vibrations in the wind of ego or like fragrance emanating from the flower of ego. Like fire and heat, water and liquidity, this ego is inseparable from the world.

This world exists in ego and ego exists in this world. In this vicious circle of the ego and the world, each gives rise to the other, and each depends upon the other.

By the practice of enquiry and the affirmation that "I am not the ego, I am the Self," a sage attains the water of wisdom. With its help, he dissolves the painting of the world-process, and realizes the canvas—Pure Consciousness.

O Vidyadhara, in reality the ego-sense is illusory. It is as non-existent as the horns of a hare. When the ego is

negated, this world-process becomes non-existent. Thus, having negated the world-process, may you enjoy the bliss of *nirvana* (liberation).

With the cessation of the ego and the world-process, you will become free of the external world of objects and the internal world of thoughts and desires of the mind.

That which is essentially non-existent can never be real. This ego and the world are non-existent. Realize this, and become free of all miseries.

You are essentially *Brahman*—pure, non-dual, peaceful, eternal, the supreme being. By the force of illusion, out of vacant space there may arise a gigantic mountain (as in a dream). By the force of knowledge, even this vast cosmos turns into a speck of dust.

Section 16—*Vidyadhara Attains Samadhi*

Sage Kakabhushundi continued: O Sage, as I was imparting my instructions, the Chief of the Vidyadharas became free of the illusion of the world-process. Consequently, his mind entered into *samadhi* (superconscious state).

Being highly qualified as an aspirant, he did not need to practise various disciplines. All that was needed by him was to listen to my teachings, and he entered into the highest state of liberation in an effortless manner.

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, I have related this narrative to you to illustrate the effect of spiritual instruction in a pure mind. Just as a drop of oil spreads over the surface of water, in the same way, spiritual instruction spreads over a pure mind.

O Rama, the essence of spiritual instruction consists in realizing the fact that the ego is non-existent in the Self. Therefore, do not entertain the ego-thought. As a result, you will enjoy supreme peace and bliss.

Just as pearls do not stick to the surface of glass, in the same way, spiritual instructions do not stick to the mind that is uncultured. On the other hand, these instructions enter the pure mind in the same way as the rays of the sun enter and shine in diamonds.

Ego-thought is the seed of the mighty tree of the world-process. It is the ego-thought that gives rise to the notion, "This is mine." It serves as the main trunk of the tree, giving rise to the ramifying branches of desire, attachment, hate, and other evils of the world-process.

At times even dull-witted people live for a long time. Knowledge of the Self leads to liberation; it does not necessarily promote a long life. (Whether one lives for a long time or a short time, the true purpose of life is the attainment of Self-realization alone.)

When the heart is purified by the constant practice of spiritual disciplines, one attains the highest goal by simply listening to the teachings.

O Rama, having listened to this story from Sage Kakabhushundi, I took leave of the Sage and repaired to the abode of Vidyadhara in order to learn the truth of the story. Then I returned to my own abode.

O Rama, eleven great *yugas* have rolled by since I learned this story from Kakabhushundi—the Crow Sage. Knowledge of the Self gives rise to instantaneous liberation.

Section 17—*The Fire That Burns the Seed of the World-process*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the ego is non-existent. This knowledge is the means to the destruction of desire—which is productive of the sweet and bitter fruits of virtue and vice.

With the intensity of this knowledge, one begins to look upon both gold and stone in the same light. In fact, he sees the Self in all. He has no desires, no cause for sorrow and misery.

Just as a cannon ball is shot from a cannon, in the same way, from the cannon of the mind, the ball of the ego is shot by the explosive force of spiritual enquiry. Then the ego becomes dissipated and, consequently, the world-process ceases to exist.

Ego dissolves and disappears like mist before the fire of egolessness. It vanishes like dewdrops before the rising sun of knowledge.

In the absence of the knowledge of the Self, the ego is never lost. Whether a person sleeps, dreams or wakes; whether he wanders through forests and hills; whether he abides in earth, water, air, or fire—the ego in him remains like a seed which brings forth the mighty tree of the world-process.

A tree with its numerous branches, leaves, flowers and fruits abides in a tiny seed. In the same way, this gigantic tree of the world-process—with its numerous branches of desires, leaves of good and evil actions, flowers of subtle desires, and fruits of pleasure and pain—abides in the ego.

When the ego-seed is burned up by the fire of knowledge, the tree of the world-process ceases to exist. One experiences infinite bliss.

Section 18—*The Illusory Worlds and the Absolute Self*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, there is no total destruction in death. After the termination of a set of *samkalpas* (thoughts), another set of *samkalpas* comes to operate for a certain duration of time. This is termed death.

The world abides within the *chitta* or the mind-stuff. The mind-stuff functions within the Cosmic Prana. The Prana moves in the ether of the Absolute Self.

When a person dies, his vital forces depart from his body. These vital forces mingle with the Cosmic Prana just in the same way as rivers merge in the ocean.

The Cosmic Prana, moving in the ether of *Brahman*, contains the minds of countless souls. Each mind contains a world-process in the same way as the oil seed contain oil. These countless worlds that move like swirling clouds in the ether of *Brahman* can be viewed by the eye of wisdom alone.

O Rama, this world that you experience is of the same nature as the world experienced by each soul after death. It exists in the form of reflections in a lake and is therefore illusory in nature.

For one who lacks thoughtfulness, even petty things become gigantic. The mice that enter a treasure chest are not thrilled to find the diamonds and jewels, but if they could find a few grains of food they would be immensely delighted.

In the same way, ignorance makes a soul petty-minded. The transient and illusory objects of the world become a source of great joy, while the invaluable treasure of the Self is viewed with cold indifference.

As long as the mind is involved in the erroneous notions that "This is desirable, and that is not desirable," so long there is dullness of intellect.

It is due to dull-wittedness that one considers himself a physical body. On the other hand, due to his enlightened mind, Hiranyagarbha (the deity of the Cosmic Mind) views the whole universe as his body.

Just as a piece of iron contains within itself all implements such as scissors, knives, needles etc., in the same way, the Cosmic Being contains within himself the multiplicity of countless world-systems along with the countless souls that are confined to them.

Countless world-systems float in the vastness of *Brahman* in the same way as cotton balls are driven by wind. However, viewed by the eye of wisdom, there is nothing but *Brahman*—the non-dual Self.

Section 19—*The Jivas and the Cosmic Being*

☞ Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, a *jiva* that is described as a minute atom is neither gross nor subtle; it is, in fact, the all-pervasive, all-encompassing Self or *Brahman*.

Every *jiva*, being a reflection of the Self in the mental process, has amazing powers. It discovers a world for itself led by its desires and fancies. Whatever *samkalpa* or will is sustained by the soul becomes its reality.

In the beginning, Hiranyagarbha or the Cosmic Being arose out of the Supreme Being. This Cosmic Being, known as Brahma (the Creator), has eight limbs—the senses, the organs of action, pranas, mind and ego.

It is he who sang the verses of the *Vedas* through his four mouths (four faces representing the four directions). He created the laws of righteousness. The netherworlds constitute the soles of his feet, the vast space his stomach,

the countless world-systems his sides. The water element is his blood.

The mountains are his muscles, the rivers are his veins. The ocean is the reservoir of his blood. The islands are his intestines. The directions are his open arms. The stars are the hairs on his body. The winds are his vital forces.

The sun is his luminous eye. The hot currents in the ocean are his bile. The moon is his mind. The Absolute Self is his essential nature.

This Cosmic Being has manifested countless times and will continue to manifest again and again. The Absolute Self or *Brahman* assumes the role of the Cosmic Being through his *Maya*. When *Maya* is transcended, the Absolute Self alone exists.

Sections 20-21 — *Liberation Is Attained by Piercing the Knot of the Ego*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, this world is projected by the *samkalpa* or thought waves of the Cosmic Mind. Nothing is real; neither the gross objects nor the subtle objects exist.

Overpowered by the world-process, which is an extension of ignorance, an individual soul enters into the illusion of subject-object relationships and is unable to behold its essential nature as *Brahman*—the Absolute.

Ignorance manifests through its greatest knot—the ego. By realizing its illusory nature, an aspirant rends this

knot asunder and attains liberation from the cycles of birth and death.

O Rama, one must become a *jnani* (a wise sage), not a *jnana bandhu* (one who pretends to be a sage).

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, who is called a *jnana bandhu*, and what does he gain?

Sage Vasistha explained: He who studies the scriptures and gives discourses on them just for the sake of securing worldly pleasures and does not practise the teachings for his own enlightenment is called a *jnana bandhu* (a hypocrite).

His knowledge is confined to words alone. He may give thrilling discourses with the intention of deceiving others.

According to his view, the fruit of scriptural studies is nothing but attainment of food, money and enjoyments of the senses.

Turning away from the knowledge of the Self that brings release, he labors hard for acquiring worldly knowledge that intensifies bondage. He is indeed a hypocrite.

One should earn wealth by taking recourse to actions that are not condemned by the scriptures. One should adopt simplicity in his life. One should eat to sustain life, and he should sustain life to attain the knowledge of the Self.

A *jnana bandhu* continues to be afflicted with the disease of the world-process, while a *jnani* becomes free of

the cycles of birth and death. Therefore, one should never be a *jnana bandhu*.

Section 22—*The Yoga of Bliss*

A liberated sage continues to perform his day to day actions led by the operation of his *prarabdha karma* (fructifying karma). Though perceiving the world through his senses, mind, and intellect, he abides in the transcendental vision of the Self.

In the case of an enlightened sage, the *vasanas* or subtle desires pertaining to the world are destroyed by the intuitive vision of the Self. With the intellect illumined by the light of intuition, the sage does not become involved in the world-process.

That wisdom which brings about the cessation of the recurring wheel of birth and death is the true wisdom. Any form of intellectual knowledge which does not lead to the attainment of liberation is merely for maintaining one's livelihood in this transient world.

A sage continues to perform his duties led by the fructification of his past karma, but his mind is ever free from desire and egoistic involvements. Such a sage is a true wise man.

The concept of causation that the mind evolves is faulty. The world is not causally linked to *Brahman*. How can clouds be related to the sky? This understanding of the falsity of causation must be promoted by a healthy reason.

The only cause of this world-process is ignorance, which vanishes with the advent of intuitional knowledge. The soul, overcome by the dualistic impressions of identification with the body, mind, senses, intellect and ego, becomes glued to the awareness of individuality. Thus, it enters into the world-process.

When the soul becomes free from its identification with the not-self, it attains the unending bliss of the Self. This is called liberation.

A sage who is endowed with transcendental vision of the Self (*para drishti*) sees the world as waves in the ocean of *Brahman*. He is like the freedom of the breeze that plays with the leaves of human personality. The leaves of life may terminate, but the breeze must blow on freely.

The subtle desires pertaining to the objects of the world give rise to the importance of karma (action) in the world of illusion. But, when the intellect has grasped the transcendental vision of the Self, there is no dependence on karma.

The senses of an ignorant man are like vultures. They soar high in the horizons of mental expansion, but they swoop down to the rotting carcass of perishable pleasures.

The *jiva* or individual soul, identified with the vital process in the living body, exists like a seed in the heart. From this seed there arises the tree of the world-process. In this state of identification the soul experiences the process of embodiment in this illusory world-process. But, when it becomes free from ignorance, the seed of *jivahood* is destroyed, and unbounded bliss of the Self is realized.

He who is unable to negate the mind, intellect, ego, and all expressions of the not-self in his consciousness is devoid of the means for Self-realization. His miseries do not terminate.

The knower of the Self is like the emperor of emperors. He is fed and clothed by others. He is unaware of the diversities of the world. He is immersed in the experience of the non-dual bliss of the Self.

Like a burned up cloth, his subtle desires are burned up by the fire of wisdom. He is immersed in the sleepless sleep of *nirvana*—supreme blessedness. The world with all its awakeners cannot awaken the sage from his spiritual sleep.

The world is an extension of the *jiva*-consciousness. When the *jiva* or the individual soul rests in the Self, the world disappears from his view.

Supreme dispassion is the means for attaining Self-realization. The only difference between a wise man and an ignorant man is that the former is devoid of *vasanas* while the latter is immersed in them.

Whether a sage engages himself in action or stays without performing actions, he is ever established in the Self because he is devoid of mental limitations, beyond all attachments.

The *chitta* or mind that sustains identification between the soul and the body is the cause of bondage. However, when that mind negates the body due to intuitional knowledge, there arises liberation for the soul.

That which illumines the functions of the mind, as well as transcends the contents of mental perceptions, is *Brahman*. When a yogi abides in the light that illumines the mind, he attains the fullness of spiritual realization.

For a sage of intuitive wisdom, the world shines as *Brahman* or the Absolute. One who is devoid of wisdom sees the world in accordance with his limited mind, conditioned by his karmas

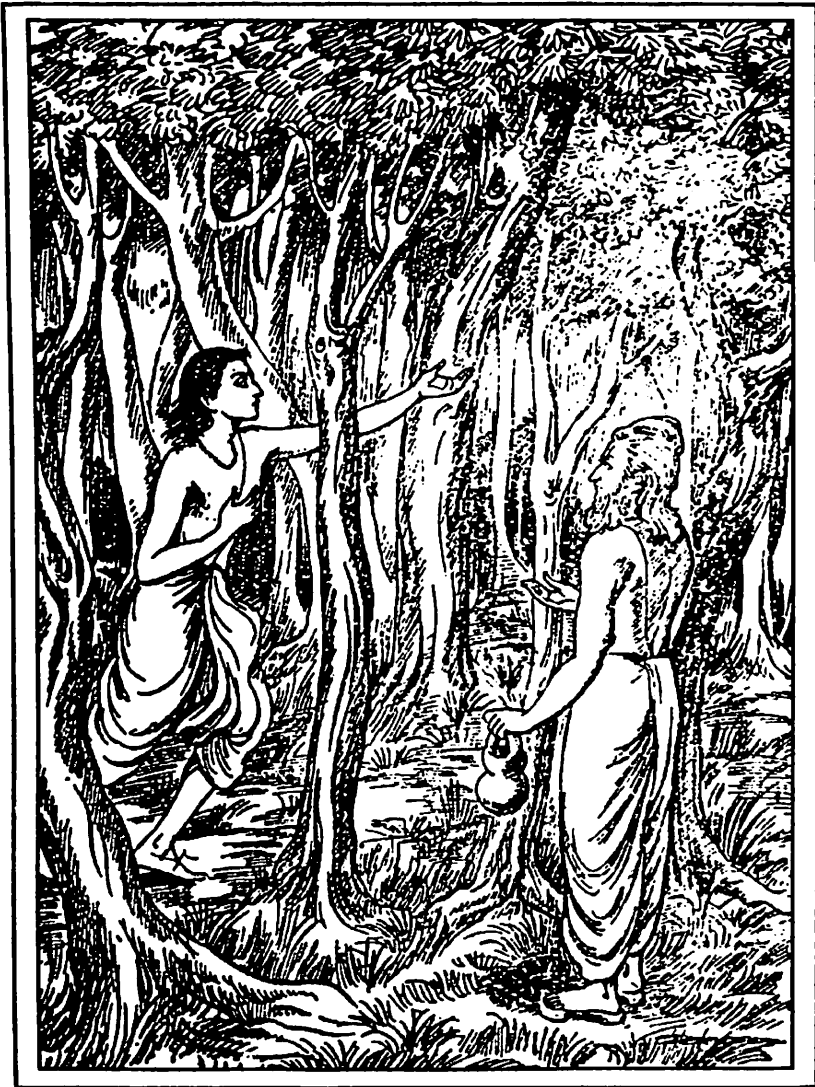
Section 23—*The Story of Manki Brahmana*

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, Manki Brahmana attained liberation by the force of dispassion. In the same way, may you attain liberation even in this life. Please listen to this elevating account.

Once upon a time, your grandfather, Aja, had invited me to officiate in a sacrificial performance. As I traveled through the sky on my way to the royal city of Ayodhya, I happened to see a vast forest.

The forest, enveloped in mist and a cloud of dust, was extremely dense and inaccessible. It enfolded within itself arid lands in which the sun's rays shimmered to create the illusion of mirage. In this great forest I saw a traveler who was wandering in vain.

Fatigued and exhausted, the traveler was saying to himself: Evil association gives rise to the fiery torments of misery. In the same way, the sun is tormenting me by its scorching heat. The whole forest seems to be withering under the fiery rays of the sun.



Sage Vasistha encounters Manki Brahmana

Let me hasten to this small village which is within my sight. Having relieved myself of this fatigue, I will travel onwards.

Sage Vasistha continued: While the traveler was contemplating moving on to the next village, I asked him thus: O friend, you are traveling through this vast forest that includes boundless expansions of desert. It seems you are unaware of the paths that lead you out of this inaccessible region.

The next village to which you are hastening your steps abounds with petty-minded people. You will not be welcomed there. These villagers are afraid of culture and education. They live like animals. The pleasures they provide are like salty waters that continue to increase one's thirst. You will not find rest even if you were to live in their midst for a long time.

It is better to be a python in a dark cave, or a worm in a stone, or a wounded deer in a desert, than to abide with the petty-minded persons who reside in this village.

The traveler (Manki Brahmana) said: O Divine Being, who are you? You are viewing this world from the heavens as a traveler would view his short sojourn through a village. Have you drunk the nectar of immortality? Are you the Divine Self or the Cosmic Being? You indeed shine like the full moon with your spiritual effulgence.

You are the very embodiment of peace, joy, harmony, effulgence, auspiciousness and strength. Indeed you are

endowed with the divine powers of omniscience and omnipotence.

O great Being, I am born in the family of Shandilya. My name is Manki. For the sake of pilgrimage I have traveled far and wide. Now I am desirous of returning home. However, I have developed dispassion towards the perishable pleasures of the world. The perspective of going back to my earthly home does not seem to be delightful to me.

O Sage, please introduce yourself to me. A sage is the friend of all beings. The light of universal love that is emanating from you has unfolded the lotus of my heart. Therefore, I have emboldened myself to ask you of your identity.

Even though my mind has developed intense dispassion towards the objects of the world, my intellect is yet unable to grasp the nature of reality. I am in need of receiving instructions from you, my Divine Guru. Let the rays of your wisdom dispel the darkness from my heart.

Sage Vasistha replied: O wise aspirant, I am Vasistha, who abides in Brahma Loka (the world of Brahma—the Creator). I am going to attend a sacrificial function that is being performed by the great King, Aja.

O traveler, you need not worry anymore. You have found the path of the wise. You have almost crossed this forest of the world-process by the very fact of your coming into my association.

Just as a jewel is purified in a gradual process, in the same way, the mind is freed of its impurities in a gradual manner.

O Brahmana, present your spiritual enquiries before me. What do you want to know? How do you intend to renounce this world? You are a qualified aspirant. Now tell me all about yourself.

*Esoteric Meaning of the
Story of Manki Brahmana*

Manki Brahmana represents a typical aspirant who discovers himself in the vast forest of the world-process, wandering aimlessly. The joys of the world are like mirage waters scintillating in the desert. The village in which he wishes to find happiness and rest is the individual consciousness. This abounds with "villagers" in the form of unillumined ego, mind, intellect and senses. They cannot provide eternal rest for the soul. Their enjoyments give rise to more thirst and craving. They are steeped in the gloom of ignorance and falsehood.

Sage Vasistha is the higher Self, abiding in the transcendental horizons of consciousness. He sees the world like a small village, a place where there is nothing delightful for the soul that has developed aspiration for the heavenward expansion. The soul, endowed with aspiration and dispassion, cannot find its home in the transient conditions of the world.

With this basic plot of the story, Sage Vasistha expounds the spiritual instructions that lead an aspirant to the glorious state of liberation.

Section 24—The Dispassion of Manki Brahmana

Manki Brahmana said: O Sage, I have wandered for a long time, searching for a person who could dispel the doubts of my mind. At last, I have been blessed with your good association. I find the very purpose of my existence fulfilled in your holy presence.

I will relate to you the afflictions of my mind. I have found all the joys of the world to be modifications of pain. I consider miseries even more desirable than the pleasures of the world.

Just as fish are used to living in water, so too, people are accustomed to a life of perpetual misery. Being insensitive to the painful operations of their attachments, they interpret negative developments as pleasant conditions.

My mind has been gathering worthless dust due to ignorance. It has become like a dirty part of a village which has collected heaps of rubbish. The desires for pleasures of the senses arise like foul smells from the rotting rubbish in order to attract the attention of the “vulturous” senses.

Devoid of the light of intuitional vision, I have been wandering in the dark night of the world-process. This

creeper of craving, devoid of the nectarine sap of discriminative knowledge, continues to grow in vain. It does not bring forth any significant flower nor satisfying fruit.

The karmas of today join with the store of the evil karmas of the past. I have found the entire karmic process to be a painful predicament for the soul. The attachments towards physical relatives continue to grow, and the desires for future enjoyments are flourishing within me. I know that all this will lead me to frightful conditions of life.

People are drawn to the apparent glitter of wealth and power. But, they are like those persons who have been lured by the glitter of the eyes of a snake to their own doom.

So far I have been guided by diffused light from distant stars, provided by the study of scriptures, and also by the light of the waxing and waning moon, provided by accidental good associations. Now, at last, I have discovered the Sun in the form of your divine personality.

O Sage, your presence is like a lion, ready to destroy the elephant of darkness, or like the sun, ready to dispel the night of ignorance, or like fire, ready to consume the forest of karmas.

I am sunk in the evil of the world-process. Please do what is best to save me from being drowned. With deep humility I beseech you to guide me across this world-process by your illuminating instructions.

Section 25—*The Seeds of the World-process and Their Destruction*

Sage Vasistha said: O Manki Brahmana, these four are the seeds of the world-process: *samvedana* (sense-enjoyment), *bhavana* (constant thought of objects), *vasana* (subtle desires that taint the unconscious), and *kalana* (fructification of karma, causing future embodiment).

The senses bring perceptions of the objects of the world. These perceptions are called *samvedana*. Due to lack of spiritual insight, the mind enters into the illusion of believing that happiness can be secured by indulging more and more in the sense-enjoyments. This gives rise to constant thought about the manifold joys that the objects seem to promise. This is termed as *bhavana*.

When a person thinks constantly about the objects of the world, the unconscious depths of his mind become dominated by the impressions of illusion. Subtle inclinations arise from his unconscious to feed the flames of his desires and to maintain his dependence on the objects of the world. These subtle inclinations that vitiate the placid firmament of the mind are called *vasana*.

These *vasanas* become the basis for the growth of the karmic tree for every individual soul. As karma fructifies, the soul enters into embodiment and experiences pleasure and pain through diverse conditions and relationships. It continues to revolve in the wheel of birth and death, driven by the operation of karmas.

When the intellect is lit up by the light of intuition, the perceptions of the objects of the world brought about by the senses do not give rise to desires in the mind. Ignorance is the source of these four seeds. With the removal of ignorance, the perceptions of the senses are unable to delude the vision of the soul.

Lit up by intuitive vision, a sage continues to experience the objects of the world through his senses, but he does not store impressions of *raga* (attachment) and *dwesha* (hatred) in his unconscious mind. Therefore, the objects of the world become like windows revealing the grandeur of eternity.

When you enjoy a picturesque sight of nature through an open window, you do not become attached to the window and its frame, but to the wondrous expansion that lies beyond. In the same way, a sage does not become attached to the senses and their perceptions when he begins to view the wondrous expansions of the Self through his intuitive intellect.

O Manki Brahmana, *samvedaan* and *bhavana* are the basis of all the evils of the world-process. Of these two, it is *bhavana* (mental reflection on the objects of the world) which is the greater basis of the illusions of the world.

The soul continues to discover diverse conditions in this world led by the fructification of its subtle desires and karmas. A man of insight and healthy reason must learn to see defects in the enjoyment of objects. Thus, instead of

thinking of the objects, he must develop *Brahma bhavana*—constant flow of the mental process towards *Brahman*.

Just as the moisture of the atmosphere is consumed by the fiery rays of the sun at the end of spring and the advent of hot summer, so too, with the cessation of worldly thoughts, the subtle desires of the mind are consumed by the fiery flames of wisdom.

The *vasanas* (subtle desires of the unconscious) act like life-giving sap for the growth of the world-tree. When the mind flows to *Brahman*, however, this sap is consumed by the fire of wisdom, and the world-tree withers away, leaving behind the transcendental radiance of the Self.

The ever-effulgent reality of the Self is obscured by a mystic veil. This veil is the cause of the beginningless projection of the world-process. It is known by different names. Because of its deluding force, it is called delusion or *bhranti*. Because it obscures knowledge, it is called *avidya* or ignorance. Because it causes distraction in the mind, it is called *bhrama* or illusion, and because it sustains the projection of the multiplicity of the world, it is called *samsara* (the world-process).

This world does not exist in reality. It is like an illusory ghost perceived by a frightened child. With the shining light of wisdom, the darkness disappears and the soul is no longer frightened by its own illusions.

When the Self is realized, all limitations are destroyed. Just as a river enters the sea, renouncing its name and form

and all its individualized characteristics, in the same way, the soul becomes unified with the Absolute.

The knowable objects and the knowing Self are in fact the same non-dual *Brahman*. When knowledge unfolds, the subject and object relationship is dissolved, and the Self alone remains.

The triad of seer, seen and sight vanishes when the true nature of the Self is discovered. This world is nothing but an illusory projection of Pure Consciousness. Therefore, with the discovery of Pure Consciousness, the world disappears from one's view.

This world is not a blend of conscious spirit and unconscious matter. Rather, the conscious spirit of the Self is the only reality. Unconscious matter cannot exist by itself without the sustenance of the Self. The names and forms of golden ornaments cannot exist without the basic metal of gold; in the absence of gold, the names and forms become myth and non-existent. In the same way, the world becomes non-existent without the Self, which is Existence Absolute.

With a profound insight into the illusoriness of the objects of the world, an aspirant must renounce all worldly *vasanas* from his unconscious mind. Deprived of the force of illusion generated by the storm of *vasanas*, his soul will no longer flutter like a feeble leaf; rather, it will realize its essential nature in the form of the immutable Self.

The raging storm and the thundering clouds cannot affect the placid firmament of the blue sky. In the same way,

this world-process does not affect the Self. He who has torn the veil of ignorance by the force of knowledge no longer revolves in the cycles of birth and death. Rather, he realizes the true purpose of human existence by bringing about the cessation of all illusions of life.

Section 26—*Bondage and Liberation*

Sage Vasistha continues: O Manki Brahmana, when the soul enters into the world-process it is invaded by numerous afflictions, which abound like insects and worms during the rains.

The objects of the world are unrelated to each other. The mind evolves concepts of relationships and causation. It is the *bhavana* of the mind (thought of the objects) that links one with the objects of the world so that one becomes, as it were, fettered to them.

It is a great wonder that the soul allows itself to be dominated by the *vasana* of the unconscious, and thus continues to experience numerous births and deaths. Though this world is illusory, by the force of *vasana* it becomes the basis for unending experiences of pleasure and pain. Those who have crossed the ocean of subtle desires (*vasanas*) are immersed in Supreme Bliss. They shine like the full moon, filled with nectarine bliss.

But the ignorant are like dull-witted children. They continue to involve themselves in the varying conditions of the world without exercising their reason and understanding. They are like fish that are ruthlessly trapped by bait.

Body, wealth, sex, and pleasures of the senses are the baits to trap the soul in this essenceless desert of the world-process. Deprived of the ocean of bliss, the soul flutters in misery.

O *chitta* (mind), you cannot find peace even if you were to wander for a whole *kalpa* (an immense duration of time) through numerous incarnations. Mere intellectual knowledge does not remove the taint of the world-process from your consciousness. However, when intellectual knowledge joins with mental concentration or *avadhana*, it becomes transformed into intuitive knowledge, which reveals the true nature of the Self.

Let your insight join with mental alertness, otherwise you will be overcome by the *pishacha* (evil spirit) of desire. This world is an extension of non-discrimination and procrastination.

When one closes his eyes, the world is shut out from view. In the same way, by shutting the outgoing tendency of the mind the whole world is effaced from one's consciousness.

The intuitive knowledge that this world is nothing but *Brahman* destroys the *vasanas* of the mind. This leads to the cessation of egoistic desires, which lead to karmic entanglements arising out of sense-object contact.

When the thoughts of the mind subside, all perspectives of pleasure and pain are seen as appearances in *Brahman*. They dissolve in *Brahman* like mist in the clear sky.

When the ego-sense arises in the vast firmament of the Self, there develops the mist of the world-process. However, when this ego-sense is removed or transcended, the mist dissolves, and the supremely peaceful state of the Self is realized.

Desire for the objects of the world is the cause of bondage, while desirelessness is the secret of liberation. A wise man, therefore, has no desires for the objects of the world.

When the consciousness of a person becomes free from the illusions caused by expectation, action, attachment, and externalizing desires, it becomes the Self, which is the embodiment of peace and bliss.

A man of wisdom abides in his essential nature. He outgrows the world revealed by the sense-object contacts (*samvedana*). His mind does not hanker for the objects of the world. He becomes free from *bhavana* (externalized movement of the mind). This leads to the purification of the unconscious. The subtle egoistic desires (*vasanas*) are replaced by spiritual impressions (*shubha samskaras*) based upon the increasing universality of one's vision and awareness.

With the removal of egoistic subtle desires from the unconscious, the karmic tree (*kalana*), which forces the soul to enter into repeated embodiments, is destroyed. With the eradication of the karmic tree, the soul is no longer dominated by the veil of ignorance; it becomes free from

the taint of the world-process and abides in its essential nature—the Absolute or *Brahman*.

Sage Vasistha continued relating this story to Rama: When Manki Brahmana heard these teachings he attained enlightenment. Just as a snake discards its outer skin and glides on freely, in the same way, Manki Brahmana discarded all the illusions of the world-process. He continued to perform the actions of day to day life without being dominated by egoistic vision and mental limitations.

Gradually, he became immersed in *samadhi* (superconsciousness). Even now he exists as firmly as a rock in the non-dual vision of the Self. Therefore, O Rama, adopt the same method that led Manki Brahmana to the state of spiritual liberation.

Section 27 — *Instructions for Attaining Steadiness in the Self*

Having related the story of Manki Brahmana, Sri Vasistha said: O Rama, rise above the confusions of the world and follow the path that leads to the attainment of the Self. As long as this infinite Self is not known, it appears in multiple forms. But with the rising of wisdom there is neither multiplicity nor unity. How can there be conceptual development in the transcendental Self?

The silvery clouds assume the appearance of beautiful clothes; however, they cannot be worn. In the same way, the

conceptual awareness of self in the body does not serve any purpose for the soul.

O Rama, your *bhavana* (thought-process) must be directed towards the Self, which is infinite like the vast sky. Let your mind delight in the Self. Other than the Self there is nothing substantial in this illusory world.

Ascertain the nature of the Self, which is beyond the triad of meditator, meditation, and the object of meditation. The subject who practises meditation, the object of meditation, and the process of meditation—all these three are illusory. They are like changing clouds in the ether of Consciousness. The Reality is that which is not contradicted in the three periods of time.

The Self excels even the profundity of the ocean. The ocean is agitated by tidal waves caused by the full moon, and is dried up during the state of *pralaya* (universal destruction). However, a sage ever abides in the Self that is homogeneous and eternal.

Just as it is impossible to find a forest in the sky, or churn oil out of sand, or discover lightning flashes in the moonlight, in the same way, it is impossible to find the body and other material objects in the illumined mind of a sage.

This world does not exist. Therefore, do not be frightened by it. By the force of my instructions, may you rise beyond the ego-sense. Then you will become free from elation and depression caused by prosperity and adversity.

You will abide in the Self that is ever free from all changes of the world.

The mental processes that sustain elation, desire, grief and other defects are the cause of innumerable sufferings. O Rama, you must strive to renounce them. Let your mind be freed from these defects and flow on to *Brahman*. You will not return to the world-process ever again.

Section 28— *The True Nature of Karma*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, please relate to me again the true nature of karma, the manner in which it gives rise to the world-process, and its relationship with destiny.

Sri Vasistha said: The world-process is sustained by the subtle desires of the mind (*vasanas*). The *vasanas* give rise to vibrations in consciousness. When these *vasanas* are removed, the vibrations in consciousness subside, and the world-process is negated.

If the vibrations of consciousness are devoid of *vasanas*, they will not create limitation for the soul. Just as the waves of the ocean are devoured by whirlpools, in the same way, the vibrations that sustain the world-process are devoured by the vibrations generated by the ego-transcending vision of the Self.

Karma is the essence of destiny. The essence of karma lies in self-effort. The true nature of self-effort is in the form of vibrations in consciousness. When the vibratory aspect

of consciousness is negated by intuitive vision, Pure Consciousness alone remains.

Destiny, karma, the individual soul and the world-process—all these are varying forms of vibrations of consciousness. They are essentially the same Self. Just as ripples, waves, foam and bubbles are the same ocean, in the same way, all these are the same *Brahman*.

A human personality is characterized by karma. Devoid of karma, it is Pure Consciousness. It is this Absolute Self (Pure Consciousness) which manifests its glory through all that exists.

Behold the glory of the emergence of a tree out of a small seed, and the emergence of man out of the subtle vital fluid. It is the Divine Consciousness which is the basis of all unfoldments in creation. Who else could have created the bodies of gods, men, demons and other living beings?

This being so, whoever considers karma different from the Self is merely a beast among the scholars. Glory to their folly! The purpose of scholarship lies in the child-like simplicity of consciousness through which one rises beyond the illusions of karma and abides in the eternal Self.

When a person rises above the network of *vasanas*, he is ever detached from the objects of the world. Such a person may or may not perform actions; he is ever established in *asanga* or detachment. Attachment exists on the basis of subtle desires, and is eradicated when the subtle

desires are dissolved and transcended by intuitional knowledge of the Self.

An aspirant must adopt any method that suits his nature for the destruction of *vasanas*. He may adopt the method enjoined in Raja Yoga or that enjoined in Hatha Yoga. It is very important that he must maintain a sustained practice of whatever aspect of yoga he adopts for the removal of his subtle desires.

As one advances on the path of yoga, he comes to realize that the formation of *vasanas* is based upon the illusion of the ego-sense or egoism. If the ego-sense is negated by spiritual enquiry, meditation, and knowledge, the *vasanas* will dissolve like mist before the rising sun.

O Rama, release yourself from the fetters of desires and abide in the immutable Self. Though performing your day to day duties, you will not generate *vasanas* which bring about the world-process for the soul. You will sport in the Self. Thus, may you shine as the fearless *Brahman*!

Section 29—A Sage Performs Actions and Is Yet Established in the Actionless Self

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, continue to perform your actions in accordance with the operation of your *prarabdha karma* (fructifying karma). Give up attachments to this material world. Rise beyond the veil of *vasanas* (subtle desires) and experience the infinite expansion of the Self.

Though apparently affected by the alternating conditions of pleasure and pain, you must always abide in the Self. While the ignorant are caught in the wheel of the world-process, wise sages are ever-free, established in the Self.

While confronting the practical realities of the world, be as realistic as the ignorant men, but do not be caught by the illusions of the world. The ignorant are led to perform actions on the basis of their egoistic interest. They reveal great tenacity in acquiring the objects of their desire. They endeavor to succeed in every work that they perform. However, they are led to activity impelled by their egoistic desires.

Sages, on the other hand, have renounced egoistic desires. They have transcended the egoistic vision of life. They are led to perform actions on the basis of detachment from all limited objects of the world. Their minds are filled with the divine urge of doing good to all. They are backed up by the sense of infinite peace and freedom arising out of their intuitive vision.

O Rama, be happy during prosperous conditions. Appear to be miserable during adverse circumstances. Be compassionate towards the miserable. Be a hero in the midst of heroes. He whose intellect is tasting the joy of inward communion with the Divine Self is not tainted by the fleeting developments of the world.

When your mind turns to the Self, you are no longer a doer of deeds. You become free from the wheel of karma.

You become the indestructible Self. Even the most terrible thunderbolt of Indra will be rendered ineffective in injuring you.

When the intellect continues to taste the bliss of the Self, the mind does not gather the sap of subtle desires, which sustains the growth of the world-process. Therefore, continue to allow the inward flow of mind towards *Brahman*. At the same time, continue to perform your day to day duties of life.

Abandon all worries, and be endowed with a mind that has negated itself by glimpsing the Divine Self through intuitional unfoldment. Even in your waking state you must experience the silence of deep sleep; and even in deep sleep continue to be aware of the non-dual Self.

It is ignorance which causes the appearance of the three states of consciousness—waking, dream, and deep sleep—in the non-dual Self. When ignorance is destroyed by wisdom, a sage is beyond the three states and abides in the transcendental Self. In this state he is asleep to the world while ever awake to the Absolute Reality that sustains this world-phenomena.

Sri Rama asked: O best among the Sages, how do you maintain the ego-sense in you? Who is this individual personality known as Vasistha? With the negation of duality, how is it possible for you to conduct yourself in this world of limitation?

When Sri Rama asked this question, Sage Vasistha maintained silence for a while. Seeing this, Sri Rama asked

again: O Sage, why are you so quiet? There is nothing difficult for a Sage of your stature to explain to a disciple.

Sage Vasistha answered: O sinless Rama, it is not because I lack the power of expression, but because the question you asked can be best answered by the indication of absolute silence.

There are two types of questioners: one who is the knower of the Self, and the other who is ignorant. Considering you, O Rama, to be the knower of the Self, I maintained silence. You do not deserve verbal answers. But those who are ignorant need verbal answers in order to advance on the path of Self-realization.

The scope of verbal teaching is very limited. Human speech, no matter how elevated and inspiring it may be, is limited due to the blending of the various functions of the mind, such as imagination, concepts, and various methods of approach. How can the Self be expressed in limited speech? Therefore, I maintained quiet.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, please continue your instructions in spite of the limitations of speech for the sake of the world of aspirants. Please explain to me who you are with the help of words, as far as those words can point to the transcendental truth for aspirants who are unilluminated.

Sri Vasistha explained: O Rama, that which is termed as "I Am" is the changeless Self. It is devoid of internal and external differentiations. A sage maintains his ego-sense for reaching out to the disciples or for enlightening man-

kind. In reality, however, he continues to abide in the Self, wherein the ego-sense is negated. (A person may continue to enjoy the blueness of the sky, with the deep understanding that the blue color is merely an illusion.)

That which is devoid of external means as well as internal means (the mind, senses and organs of action), that which is free from the sense of actorship and enjoyership, and that which is beyond human concepts of pleasure and pain is the Self. It is the supremely blessed abode of Shiva, wherein peace and harmony abide forever.

In the absence of liberation, the ego-sense asserts itself. In the state of liberation, this ego-sense, as well as the world of multiplicity, do not exist. It is not the ego that desires liberation, nor is it the Self that needs to be liberated. In fact, the ego-sense is born of illusion and it disappears with the rising of intuitional vision.

Section 30—*Description of that Spiritual Vision Which Removes the Illusions of Multiplicity*

Sage Vasistha continued: The ego-sense in a human being is the cause of all his illusions. It is this erroneous notion that veils the lofty vision of the Self. The dull-witted seek the state of liberation without giving up the egoistic vision of life. Their efforts are likened to the actions of a mad person.

O Rama, a sage removes the impurity of egoism from his *chitta* and abides in the glorious state of liberation.

Abiding in this ego-transcending state, a sage is ever free, whether he engages himself in action or stays without it, or whether he is with or without his physical body.

The beauty of consciousness bereft of the dark clouds of egoistic illusions far surpasses the beauty of the sky in autumn, or the grandeur of the tranquil ocean on a moonlit night, or any picturesque spectacle of nature conceivable by the human mind.

The actions of a sage are like scenes of dynamism portrayed in a painting. Though the painted soldiers appear to be agitated, the painting is ever calm and still. Similarly, though the external life of a sage is filled with diverse activities, his inner life continues to be calm and peaceful.

The desires of a wise sage are not like ordinary *vasanas* or subtle desires expressing themselves in ignorant men. The waves in the ocean are nothing but the ocean; so too, the desires of a sage do not cause distraction in his ocean-like consciousness.

He who is not agitated by the internal waves of the mind and the external waves of change, he who is ever joyful and contented — such a person is liberated in life.

Having dedicated his mind to the glorious expansion of the Self, a sage does not generate egoistic desires, though performing various actions in his day to day life. As long as egoistic vision persists, the state of liberation cannot be realized.

Renunciation of enjoyments, practice of enquiry, and control over the senses and the mind—these are three of the most effective means for attaining Self-realization. Therefore, having taken recourse to these means, O aspirants, move on to the glorious goal of Self-realization.

**Section 31—*All Objects Are Sustained
by Consciousness***

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, whatever object a person directs his mind to is discovered in his consciousness, because consciousness is the basis of this illusory world-process.

This whole world has been imagined in consciousness, which is, in reality, even purer than the vast sky. Just as clarified butter assumes solidity within itself, even so, this consciousness assumes the solidified form of the world.

In fact, even when this world and the ego-sense, which is the sustainer of the world-experience, are both destroyed, there is no loss to the Self within.

The perishability of non-existent matter does not affect the ever-existent glory of the Self. It is for the sake of discovering the untainted nature of the Self that the scriptures have adopted the reality of the world. In this way aspirants may be led to practice discrimination and dispassion, eventually unfolding the intuitive vision which beholds the absence of the world-phenomena and the reality of the Absolute Self.

The purpose of worldly existence is to climb to that height of consciousness. At that height the world is understood to be the result of one's *samkalpa* or willing, and is thus withdrawn within oneself in the twinkling of an eye by the withdrawal of *samkalpa*.

When one realizes his unity with the Divine Self, the world is destroyed from its very root. This world will never arise in the consciousness of a sage. This creation is like a mirage sustained by the Reality of *Brahman*.

A knower of the Self experiences the unique fullness of intuitional vision, which cannot be compared even with the fullness of the lustrous moon. With this vision of transcendental fullness, a sage does not fall into the petty pits of this illusory world, which is sustained by subject-object relationships.

The ocean of fullness surges with the waves of contentment in the heart of a sage. His inner, unbounded peace cannot be described in words. An ignorant person is nothing but a product of subtle desires based on ignorance. It is because one does not endeavor to look within oneself with the penetrative insight of wisdom that the world continues to appear in one's consciousness.

When the process of enquiry into one's essential nature is slackened, the mind turns towards the objects of the world. Thus, the reality of the Self is forgotten, and the illusory world begins to assert itself in one's consciousness.

Therefore, O Rama, having renounced all these objects of the world, let your mind worship the Self alone. When the mind does not recall the experiences of the world, the soul ascends the ladder of blessedness and finally attains liberation.

A sage established in the seventh state of wisdom remains immutable like a stone in the midst of conditions that provoke attachment, hatred, and fear. This world is inherent in the Self, even as the dream world is inherent in the person who dreams.

It is the Self that appears as the world-process by externalizing itself through its identification with the mind. When this identification is destroyed, the world-process vanishes, leaving behind the infinitude of the Self.

Dream and waking states of consciousness are similar in nature. They are like the same essence of milk placed in two different containers—the same Self appearing in two forms of relativity. The idea that the waking world is more durable than the dream world is sustained by mental illusion alone. Durability and transience in the objects of the world are not objective facts, but are projections of the modes of the mind.

With the dawn of waking consciousness, a person withdraws the dream world within himself, or realizes that the objects of dream are his own manifestations. In the same way, when intuitional knowledge dawns, a sage discovers the whole world as an expression of his own Self.

When the dream of the world ceases, the pure state of Consciousness reveals itself. This state cannot be described by speech because it transcends all relative concepts of the human mind.

Sages give teachings pertaining to *Brahman* in order to awaken aspiration in the hearts of spiritual aspirants, so that they themselves may experience the bliss of *Brahman* in the light of their own intuitional knowledge.

Therefore, O Rama, it is important for an aspirant to abide in the vision of the nonduality of *Brahman*, leaving behind the vision of multiplicity characterized by fear, pride, greed, delusion, body, mind, senses, and countless variations of objects.

Section 32—Liberation Can Be Attained by the Practice of Good Association and Reflection

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, the world need not vanish from before one's vision in order to enjoy the infinite bliss of the Self. When a sage is established in the knowledge of the illusoriness of the world, he is no longer affected by its illusions.

Consciousness is of the nature of Truth. Its association with the perishable objects of the world is illusory. When a sage discovers the impossibility of such an association, he negates the illusion of the world-process and abides in *Brahman*.

A child is afraid of a ghost that he imagines in a post in the darkness of the night. However, when he understands

the reality of the post, he is no longer affected by the ghostly shadow it casts during the night. Similarly, a sage is no longer affected by the illusions of the world.

With the rising of the ego-sense, one becomes aware of one's miseries in life. When the awareness of ego-sense is withdrawn, there is no misery. This shows that by one's own self-effort one can promote liberation by withdrawing the ego-sense and eradicating ignorance, on the basis of which ego asserts.

In true meditation or *samadhi*, ignorance is destroyed by intuitive knowledge. As a result, the Self that is homogeneous, peaceful and immutable is realized.

Do not dry up your throat by discussing the divergent teachings of ignorant scholars. Take recourse to the teachings of the sages by good association and spiritual reflection.

When the *vasanas* or subtle desires are intensified, one begins to perceive things that are non-existent. On the other hand, when the *vasanas* are rendered ineffective by spiritual knowledge, even this world of practical reality is unable to disturb one's inner peace.

The utter negation of the *vasanas* in itself is called *mukti* or liberation. The rising of the *vasanas* constitutes bondage to the cycles of birth and death.

By taking recourse to contact with and service of sages and saints, one converts one's impure *vasanas* into pure and auspicious *vasanas*. With the unconscious dominated by

auspicious *vasanas*, one is able to practice the affirmation, "I am *Brahman*," and is led to the attainment of liberation.

An aspirant must enquire into "Who am I? Whence is this world-process? What is the nature of the soul?" He must devote all his life and energy to discovering the answers to these questions by seeking the association of sages and saints.

An aspirant must serve a knower of the Self, who shines like the sun. Such a sage removes the darkness of the ego-sense, which obscures the true nature of one's soul.

Section 33—*The Treatment of the Disease of the World-process*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Sri Rama, when the intellect blooms into intuition by the aid of good association, the world of duality is dissolved, and the Self is realized. This is the ultimate fruition of the process of self-effort.

Liberation consists in the cessation of all *kalpanas* or imaginations of the mind. The world-process is a projection of *manah kalpana* (imagination of the mind). In order to negate all imaginations of the mind, one must adopt counter-imaginings until the worldly imaginations are destroyed. The imagination that enables a person to develop dispassion and discrimination is a counter imagination meant to destroy the outgoing illusions of the mind. However, when the mind attains serenity, even the mental process that sustains the practice of dispassion and discrimination is transcended.

When fire has consumed the fuel, it becomes extinguished automatically.

It is the power of imagination that brings about a blend of an object, its name, and the mental idea about it. When the power of imagination is checked, the mind rises beyond the world of objects and begins to glimpse the universal expansion of the Self.

Ego-sense is the cause of the world-process. It is sustained by ignorance. When the illusion of the ego-sense is dissolved, a sage experiences the immutability of the Self. He is like an invincible rock in the midst of the surging waters of the world.

People in this world suffer from two main diseases: 1. The disease of this world expresses in the form of constant hunger, thirst, enjoyment of the objects, increasing cravings, and experiences of birth, growth, decay and death. 2. The disease of the other world is in the form of experiences after one's death and before one's rebirth. These experiences of heaven and hell must be overcome by attaining Self-realization.

The disease of the other world (of astral experiences) can be cured by utilizing one's life in this world. Just as every disease is treated by medicament and diet, in the same way, the disease of the other world (and of this world) is treated by adopting the diet of spiritual discipline and renunciation of sense-enjoyments, and medicine is adopted by taking recourse to good association.

The disease of the would-be hell must be cured while a person is alive in this world. It is impossible to exercise one's self-effort in the astral state of the soul. This disease can be eradicated only by the knowledge of the Self.

Just as childhood is the beginning of human life, in the same way, renunciation of sense-enjoyments is the beginning of cosmic life. The life of a sage flows on like a murmuring stream, unaffected by the varying conditions of the world. On the other hand, the life of an ignorant person is like an agitated river, filled with the waves of pain and suffering.

When all the imaginations of the mind are transcended and all illusions dissolved, what is left is the eternal Self. Therefore, O Rama, having renounced the illusions of birth, death, and numerous changes of life, abide in *Brahman*, wherein all mental concepts are transcended and supreme bliss is realized.

Section 34—*The World-Process Vanishes by Not-Seeing*

Sage Vasistha continued: Whatever comes under the sway of pleasure and pain must be destroyed, but the Self is indestructible. It cannot be destroyed. This is the essence of the teachings of the scriptures.

He who has desires is ever unhappy, but he who has attained desirelessness is ever happy. There is no remedy more potent than desirelessness for treating the disease of the world-process.

The ego as well as the world-process are expressions of illusion. They do not exist in the Self. When they are transcended, the supremely peaceful Self is realized. This is the nature of liberation.

Brahman cannot be negated in the three periods of time. All instructions are given to bring about the negation of the ego-sense and the world-process, which do not exist from the transcendental point of view.

Although present, the terrible *pishachas* as well as the benevolent *siddhas* are not seen by a person. The peels of thunder heard in dream by a person are not heard by others who may be sleeping in the same room. People experience the world that comes within the range of their vision. If they were to turn their vision away from the objects of the world, the world would not be perceived.

The one Self appears as the multiple world-process due to limitation in vision brought about by ignorance. When ignorance is removed and the vision of truth is unfolded within, one does not behold the world of multiplicity.

Though it is without limits, the soul experiences itself possessing limbs during the dream state of consciousness. In the same way, though the Self is without any limitation of body and mind, yet it appears in the form of the world-process.

Just as numerous pots of various shapes and sizes are molded by the potter's wheel, in the same way, numerous

objects arise, molded by the wheel of one's defective vision. All these objects are appearances made out of the clay of Consciousness.

The world is reflected in the Self like objects reflected in a crystal. The quality of reflection in a crystal is not induced by the presence of the objects. It is its inherent property. In the same way, it is not the world that asserts itself in one's consciousness, but it is consciousness that reflects the world. This being so, it is consciousness that must discover itself as the only reality behind all reflections of diversity. The Self must overpower the not-self.

When vision is corrected, the illusory perception of ego-sense vanishes like a ghost dispelled by spiritual force. Further, the ghost of ego has no reality; it is a fiction created by the limited mind.

Just as waves abide in the ocean, and the motion of wind abides in the air, in the same way, the world-process and the ego-sense abide in *Brahman*. Thus, having negated the ego as well as the world, O Rama, turn your vision away from the world. When vision is withdrawn, you will abide in the sleepless sleep of *samadhi*.

Section 35—*The Nature of Brahman*

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, between two thought-waves of the mind, this object-less consciousness is the nature of the Divine Self. May you abide in that transcendental awareness while walking, listening, touching, smell-

ing, waking, and laughing. An enlightened sage is established in this state and is steady like the Sumeru Mountains.

Avidya or ignorance is that which does not exist when seen through the penetrating vision of enquiry. That which is discovered through this penetrating vision is *para vidya* or transcendental knowledge.

Brahman and this world are one and the same, but are seen as different due to ignorance. It is due to the distracting vision caused by ignorance that *Brahman*, who is all-pervading, all-full, and pure, is seen as the limited, transient world-process.

Though ever full, *Brahman* appears as void during cosmic deluge or *pralaya*. Though ever unlimited, he appears to be limited by time and space. Though ever unchanging, he appears in the form of changing objects of the world.

Though indivisible, *Brahman* assumes the role of limited objects of the world. Though devoid of the ego-sense, *Brahman* seems to possess this ego-sense in the state of ignorance. Though free from objects, *Brahman* is the basis of all objects.

Though self-effulgent, *Brahman* seems to support the perception of dense darkness. Though the most ancient, *Brahman* appears in everything that is new in creation. Though subtler than the atom, *Brahman* enfolds the entire universe within himself.

Though the indwelling Self in all, *Brahman* adopts the difficult path of spiritual discipline in the form of sacrifice, charity, austerity, purity of mind, dispassion, listening and reflection in order to renounce the world-process. Though devoid of this world-process, *Brahman* seems to be bound to it due to ignorance.

Though devoid of *Maya* (Cosmic Illusion), *Brahman* is like the sun that sends forth radiating rays of illusion. Though Pure Consciousness, *Brahman* is the Knower of all that is felt and thought of by living beings. *Brahman* is lighter than cotton when weighed on the balance of discriminative vision, but is weightier than mountains when one's vision is devoid of discrimination.

Though devoid of time and its divisions, *Brahman* is the promoter of time and space in this illusory world-process. *Brahman* is the forest in which there grow trees of universes, decked with the leaves of the five elements.

All things that are by nature the Self exist and express themselves in the Self, in accordance with the will of the Self. The world is a projection of the Self. With the opening of the eyes, *Brahman* creates this world; with the closing of the eyes, he withdraws this world-phenomena within himself. In fact, his opening and closing of the eyes are one and the same reality. *Brahman* is ever established within himself, negating this appearance of the world-process.

Thus knowing that the world and *Brahman* are essentially identical, O Rama, abide in *Brahman* and be free from the illusions of the world-process.

Section 36—*Desire is the Cause of Bondage*

Sage Vasistha continued: An enlightened mind sees unity underlying the illusions of diversity. An unenlightened mind sees diversity and multiplicity, ignoring the basic reality of the Self. This is the cause of the development of desires.

An aspirant must understand that the objects of the world are illusory. The tendency of the mind to develop impressions of attachment and hatred must be curbed by realizing that there is nothing to be desired or avoided in this illusory world-process.

Pure Consciousness is the essence of all that exists. It is due to ignorance that it appears in the form of the multiplicity of objects. Just as recollection and forgetfulness are intimate to one's subjective nature, in the same way, ignorance and realization of the Self are dependent upon one's own self.

When the objects of the world no longer delight the mind of a person, he is, as it were, beyond this world-process. He exists without the sense of egoism and mine-ness, experiencing the objects of the world without attachment and hatred.

With reference to the objects of hearing—pleasant speeches, melodious music, words of appreciation and depreciation—he continues to maintain a balanced mind. All sounds are merely waves in the air.

Similarly with reference to all objects of touch, he maintains the indifference of being a stranger to everyone and to every object. Detached, he continues to use the sense of touch to maintain the practical realities of the world.

He tastes diverse types of dainty dishes, but his mind is always above the pleasures of the tongue. A spoon continues to be in contact with soup, and yet is ever detached from it. In the same way, the man of wisdom remains detached from the objects of taste.

As far as the objects of sight are concerned, they appear to him like painted pictures, having no existence of their own. Though enjoying the objects of sight, a sage sees the Divine Self underlying all by his intuitive vision. Therefore, his mind is not trapped by the limited names and forms of the objects.

In the same way, he experiences the objects of smell with a detached mind. All forms of smell—pleasant and painful—are like the breeze blowing through a forest, carrying the fragrance of wild flowers.

A sage sees all objects of desire as poison, and therefore he cannot delight in them. On the other hand, those who delight in them become fuel for the fires of misery.

Renunciation of desires is called *samadhi* by the knowers of the Self. By such renunciation, the mind attains supreme peace. With the rising of desires, on the other hand, the mind experiences intense misery. The joy that is experi-

enced by desirelessness cannot be found even in the world of Brahma—the Creator.

As desire is intensified, the seeds of misery continue to be nourished in the unconscious of man. As desires are gradually renounced and attenuated, the disease of the world-process comes to its gradual termination.

If all the desires cannot be renounced at once, one should renounce them gradually. Endowed with immense endurance, an aspirant must undertake the task of renouncing all desires. This sublime effort never goes in vain.

A deer is doomed to death in a forest filled with tigers. So too, the soul must experience many a death while living in the confines of the body, wherein the tigers of desires abound.

Desirelessness is *nirvana* or liberation, while the development of desires is bondage for the soul. Desire is the seed of the thorny bushes of birth, death, afflictions of life, and manifold sufferings. Burn the seed of desire by the fire of serenity.

As desires are abandoned and destroyed, the qualities that lead to Self-realization continue to reveal themselves more and more. When the mind is devoid of discriminative insight, it continues to nourish the poison-tree of the world-process by satisfying the desires through worldly enjoyments.

One who has gained insight into the vast treasure of inner spiritual bliss does not court egoistic desire for even a moment. Even a momentary fall into the sway of desires becomes painful, as if one has been robbed of all one's possessions.

O Rama, the individual soul is, as it were, roasted in the leaping tongues of fire proceeding from desire. This fire is fed by the fuel of karmic impressions embedded in one's heart. Its smoke, in the form of delusion, confounds the reason of the soul. Fettered by the ropes of attachments and entanglements, the soul, like a sacrificial animal, is constantly roasted in the fires of desire. The constant cries, sighs and sorrows of the world are the sounds that are made by the fire.

Section 37 — *The Method of Wisdom for Overcoming Desires*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, if you believe there is anything other than the Self in this world, you may maintain desires for the world. However, when you become established in the knowledge that there is nothing other than the Self, desires are overcome and destroyed.

The mind of the ignorant exists in the world of duality. It sustains the illusion of subject-object relationships. The mind of a sage transcends the relativity of consciousness caused by the limitation of vision. It beholds oneness and non-duality.

The objects of the world exist in the realm of mental illusion. When the illusion is gone, they are non-existent. Therefore, what substantial gain can a person expect from desiring them?

With the rising of intuitive wisdom, the world of triad—seer, seen and sight—disappears. The sense of individuality evaporates. This is called *nirvana* or liberation. Darkness and light cannot go together. In the same way, in the state of *nirvana* there is no reconciliation between the non-dual Self and the world of duality.

Brahman is the cause. *Brahman* is the effect. The world is an illusory modification of *Brahman* caused by the limited vision of mind. In fact, there is no pain or pleasure in the world. All this is the divine Shiva—the blessed Absolute.

A sage has no need to detach himself from the objects of the world or to attach himself to them, for he is established in the vision that all this world of subject-object relationship is a projection of the mind caused by ignorance; the Self alone is real.

A sage is beyond the “do’s and don’ts” enjoined by the scriptures and human beings. Who can instruct a sage who abides in *Brahman*? It is ridiculous for a blind person to guide a man with good eyesight about how to avoid a pit on his path.

A sage is free from desires. Consequently he does not cause fear in the hearts of others, nor can others strike fear

within his heart. He radiates fearlessness in his surroundings. Further, he is ever immersed in bliss. Thus, desirelessness, fearlessness and blissfulness are the most important indications of Self-realization.

The vision of a sage rises beyond desire and desirelessness. Even though his mind may appear to have many desires, his vision is like that of the sky, merely looking down upon the numerous clouds drifting within its vastness.

There is no remedy more potent than wisdom to overcome the desires of the mind. No one can induce desirelessness in others. Everyone must discover this attainment by his own self-effort. It is not possible for a person to work out liberation for somebody else. Can a person destroy a snake that is being seen by another person in his dream? The dreamer himself must wake up in order to be rid of his illusions.

Numerous universes exist, sustained by the illusions of the mind; numerous beings abide in these universes; and all this is sustained by the Divine Self, which alone is real. Thus, by understanding the reality of the Self and the illusion of the world-process, you will attain desirelessness.

Sections 38-39—*The Nature of the Sage Who Is Established in Wisdom*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, a sage who has attained that intuitional vision which negates the reality of the world continues to perform actions that are in accor-

dance with the scriptures. However, he does not create karmic entanglements, being devoid of *samkalpa* (egoistic will).

In the absence of spiritual knowledge, the ego-sense appears in the mirror of the mind as a misty veil. With the rising of knowledge this veil dissolves, and the ego-sense disappears.

He in whom the veil of ignorance has been destroyed and all desires have been dissolved, he who is fully satisfied with the nectar of wisdom—such a person is indeed the knower of truth.

Just as the sky is beautified by the presence of the full moon, so too, the whole world is adorned by the presence of a sage. Whoever serves a sage who is free from dependence and endowed with inner peace attains purification of the mind. He receives, as it were, a purifying breeze from the world of Brahma (the Creator).

Dream disappears in sleep, and sleep does not exist in dream, and in the waking state both dream and sleep are contradicted. Similarly, all three states of consciousness are negated in the state of liberation. In fact, there is no division in consciousness. The Self alone exists.

Just as a mighty tree is potentially hidden in a seed, in the same way, this entire creation is hidden in the abstract Self. One must understand this point by studying the scriptures and by developing intuitive wisdom.

Illusion does not exist at a particular time or in a particular space. The world is an illusion. Therefore, with the rising of wisdom it vanishes from one's consciousness. When the vision in man ceases to be a mere witness, it enters into the illusion of the world-process. Therefore, by abiding in the Witnessing Self you will attain liberation.

Entry into bondage and attainment of liberation are both dependent upon one's own choice. It is due to ignorance that one has entered into this world-process. It is by ignorance that an elephant has fallen into a pit of water made by a cow's hoof.

By the repeated practice of spiritual understanding and the consequent unfoldment of the ascending heights of spiritual wisdom, a yogi sees the gradual disappearance of the world-process. With the removal of the darkness of worldly enjoyments, the intuitive intellect shines like the sun, illumining all directions.

Section 40—*The Double Consciousness of a Liberated Sage*

Sri Vasistha continued: That pure Witnessing Self is the illuminer of the intellect and the senses, and is the Reality behind the world-phenomena. Just as dream dissolves in the state of deep sleep, in the same way, this world dissolves in the state of liberation.

All the enjoyments of the world are great diseases for the soul. All relationships are great fetters, and all worldly

prosperities are the source of great misery. Therefore, discover the boundless peace of the Self within yourself.

O Rama, in fact, you are never born. The idea that you are born in this world is due to mental illusion. One who abides in *Brahman* does not perceive this illusory world. Similarly, one who abides in the world does not perceive the effulgent Self. A person in deep sleep is unaware of dreams, and one who is aware of dreams is unable to enjoy deep sleep.

A liberated sage, though perceiving the world, is beyond the limitations of the world. He is like the sky that transcends the fleeting clouds. As the ascending steps of wisdom are perfected, even the clouds of the world-process dissolve, as it were, giving rise to the perception of the cloudless sky of the Self.

This world-process is like the fancies of the mind or empty castles of mental imagination. A sage perceives this world through his mind and senses, and yet does not perceive this world through his intuitive vision. He abides in double consciousness. However, with the cessation of his *prarabdha karma*, even the appearance of the world dissolves like the mist before the rising sun.

Section 41 — *The World Dances like a Puppet due to Ignorance*

Sage Vasistha continues: Having assumed the nature of ignorance, this Self becomes the controller of the puppet show of the world-process.

In the dancing hall of the *jiva*'s mind, this ignorance causes the puppets of the manifold realities of the world to dance with numerous modes and variations.

The seasons are the ornaments of her head, the directions are her arms, and the nether worlds constitute her feet. Brahma Loka (the world of Brahma) is her shoulders, the sun and moon are her eyes. The stars are the hairs on her body, and the seven worlds are her different limbs.

The blue sky is her apparel, and the oceans and islands are her bracelets. Numerous enjoyments and miseries are the different modes of her dance. She keeps the puppet of the world-process dancing according to her whims.

In fact, it is Consciousness that assumes the role of *avidya* (ignorance) and becomes the basis of the diverse variations of the world-process. But, when the Self is realized, ignorance is removed and the puppet show of the world-process comes to its termination. Therefore, O Rama, attain the sleepless sleep of *nirvana* and become free from this world-process.

Section 42—*The Self Is to Be Worshipped by Discriminative Vision*

The Witnessing Self and the world-process are one and the same, like the ocean and its waves, or like the wind and the atmosphere, or like vacuity and the sky.

It is in the absence of discriminative knowledge that this whole world glimmers with charm, value and sub-

stance. But, with the rising of discriminative knowledge, this world dissolves into *Brahman*.

There is nothing other than *Brahman*, the Absolute. This *Brahman* is known as Shiva by some, or as the Void by others. This *Brahman* is known differently by different people. This Absolute Self must be worshipped for the attainment of liberation.

O Sri Rama, this Self is pleased by the offering of discriminative knowledge (*viveka*). Enlightened by *viveka*, your intellect will continue to worship the Self ceaselessly. Your very life, sustained by fructifying karmas, will become a ceaseless flow of divine worship.

When worshipped by discriminative knowledge, this Self bestows upon the worshipper infinite bliss. Compared to this form of the highest worship, all other forms of worship intended to please the finite deities such as Indra, Rudra and others become as insignificant as straws.

When a devotee presents the offerings of *shama* (serenity), *vichara* (spiritual enquiry), and *satsanga* (good association) before the Divine Self seated in the heart, he is led to liberation by the grace of God in a short time.

In this form of worship the only ritual needed is to maintain a witnessing attitude towards all the internal and external phenomena of the world-process. By this act of worship the supreme Divinity, who is seated within the heart, is immensely pleased. Since such a wondrous perspective of worship is possible for everyone, why should one take recourse to the worship of external deities?

Whoever has worshipped the Self by good association, serenity, contentment, and discriminative knowledge becomes invulnerable to all harmful influences from the world. He is unaffected even by weapons, snakes, poisons, and fire.

An aspirant should nourish his discriminative knowledge by the nectarine waters of serenity. With the growth of *viveka* his subtle desires begin to dissolve. It is by the grace of the Divine Self within that he develops insight into the nature of the Self.

When all the *vasanas* (subtle desires) are dissolved with the unfoldment of discriminative knowledge, one attains *nirvana*. This is the highest state of transcendental devotion. The devotee becomes one with the Divine Self.

Section 43—*The Manner in which the World Dissolves in Brahman*

Sri Vasistha continues: O Rama, this world, consisting of the subject-object relationship, subsides in *Brahman* when one attains intuitional knowledge of the Truth.

He who has torn the veil of ignorance and whose soul is immersed in the ocean of peace arising from wisdom is characterized by the quality of distaste towards all objects of the world.

There is no need to gain knowledge about the numerous objects of the world. The absence of egoism is liberation. This alone needs to be accomplished. Just as the objects of

dream do not delight a waking person, in the same way, the objects of the world do not delight an enlightened sage.

The subjective ego as well as the objective world are both illusory. The Self is neither the enjoyer nor the objects that are enjoyed. When the illusion of the world-process is removed by knowledge, one becomes established in the non-dual Self.

The Witnessing Self alone exists, sustaining the world of multiplicity. In fact, there is really nothing to be witnessed since the Self alone exists. Therefore, may you recover your essential nature, which is the ether of Pure Consciousness, and thus drink the nectar of supreme bliss and roam in the gardens of liberation.

Why do you wander in vain in the burning deserts of the world-process, seeking the illusory waters of mirage, afflicted with sorrow and grief? Discover the painful nature of all enjoyments of the world.

Your physical existence in this world is as fleeting as a dew drop clinging to a fluttering leaf in the upper branches of a banyan tree. Do not seek security in this world, which is mere appearance.

Be heroic like a lion and break the fetters of cravings in order to release yourself from the cage of the world-process. For a pilgrim in the world-process, there are only three resting places—desirelessness, liberation, and freedom from the threefold miseries of the world.

Just as rivers lose their identities in the ocean, or a pile of straw reduces itself to indistinguishable ashes, in the same way, this world-process disappears in *Brahman*. A sage perceives the world as would a child who has not yet developed egoistic reflections in his mind. However, the attainment of a sage is far from being childish.

Objectivity is mind, and mind is objectivity. The illusory awareness of internal and external is caused by the mind. Just as the internal and external of a dream fail to have any significance for a waking person, in the same way, all that is inside and outside of a waking individual loses its reality in the state of intuitional enlightenment.

When the objects to be known do not exist, the knower attains its essential nature—the Absolute. The objects shine like lightning flashes due to their fleeting nature. It is due to ignorance that the Self is perceived as the world abounding with objects, and with the rising of knowledge the world dissolves in *Brahman*.

Section 44—*The Tree of Samadhi*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the tree of *samadhi* grows in the forest of the assemblies of wise men and continues to grow, laden with heavenly leaves, flowers and fruits. It is the nourisher of life in spiritual aspirants.

Dispassion is the seed of this tree of *samadhi*. A mind that is purified by insight, plowed by good karmas, and nourished by the channelized stream of *pranayama* is able to receive the seed of *samadhi* in the form of dispassion.

A wise aspirant should first soak the seed of *samadhi* in the nectarine milk of good association, then he should nourish it with the pure waters of reflection and meditation. Having sown the seed in the purified *chitta*, he must be vigilant in protecting its germination and growth.

When well cared for through diverse spiritual disciplines, the seed brings forth a sprout in the form of meditation. However, this tender sprout is threatened by the presence of vultures and kites in the form of passion, pride, anger, and greed. Therefore, the growth of the tree must be placed under the protection of the skilled farmer—contentment—and his wife—*mudita* or cheerfulness.



With the brooms of spiritual restraints and observances, and the practice of good actions, one should remove pebbles of *rajas* to allow the sprout to grow into tender shoots of knowledge. This young sapling of *samadhi* must receive the sunshine of knowledge by removing the dampness of ignorance.

The evil karmas of the past act like thundering clouds, and various evils of the mind such as pride and procrastination act like hailstorms to destroy the sapling of *samadhi*. However, these obstacles must be overcome by holding the trident of *Om*, and by the cultivation of patience, generosity, compassion and other *satwic* qualities.

Viveka (discriminative knowledge) is the tender shoot that grows out of the seed. It bears two lustrous leaves in the form of good association and enquiry into the Self. Protected by contentment, and nourished by increasing detachment from the objects of the world, this shoot continues to grow, giving rise to a trunk and ramifying branches.

Soon this tree becomes so strong that it cannot be shaken by the monkeys of *raga-dwesha* (attachment and hatred). The creepers of equal vision, friendliness, compassion, nobility, patience, mental poise, intuitive knowledge, truthfulness and other great qualities entwine this celestial tree of *samadhi*, lending it a spiritual charm.

The growing roots of the tree continue to pierce the veil of ignorance, and the ramifying branches continue to hold out fruits in the form of divine wisdom that leads to liberation.

Adorned with the inflorescence of spiritual fame, decked with the glistening leaves of virtues, filled with the sap of renunciation, and redolent with the blooms of intuitional knowledge, this tree radiates refreshing coolness in all directions.

O Rama, the fruit of this tree is *kaivalya* or liberation itself. It removes all miseries of human existence and bestows supreme bliss. Serenity is the cooling shade of this wondrous tree, providing refuge for wandering souls in the forest of the world-process.

The human mind is like a deer which seeks the cooling shade in order to attain freedom from the miseries of the world. Different philosophical systems raise such a clamor that the deer-mind is constantly agitated. Having wandered through various desert lands, it finds the path of good association and is led to the tree of *samadhi* by its good karmas.

Until this path of good association is adopted, this deer-mind is constantly tortured by six hunters in the form of anger, greed, pride, passion, jealousy, and infatuation. These hunters are following the deer in order to deprive it of its very skin. As the deer runs, it is pierced by thorns in the form of worldly entanglements, and its body is tormented by various afflictions.

Being deprived of intelligence this deer is ever restless and unsatiated. It continues to run after the mirage of worldly pleasures. At times it falls into the pit of embodiment, wherein it is roasted in the three-fold fires of misery.

At times this deer is swept in the currents of the world-process and is buffeted by the waves of hunger, thirst, grief, and delusion. Filled with sores, this deer tries to take refuge in the villages by seeking the fields of the senses, and is terrified by the trumpeting of the elephant of desire. The sense-enjoyments are like poisonous cobras that threaten to bite the deer.

At times the deer finds itself trapped in the forest fire of anger, and its back, bruised by fire, gives immense suffering. It is consumed by internal and external fires in the form of mental torments. Different desires are like insects that continue to swarm around its painful sores. The spirit of poverty continues to chase this deer like a tiger. Pride roars like a lion to destroy this deer.

Deserted by its wife—youthfulness, the deer is driven into dense forests by its own servants—the senses. Thus exhausted, tortured, and tormented, the deer takes refuge in the shade of the tree of *samadhi*. There it learns the art of ascending the tree to eat its immortalizing fruit of liberation.

Section 45—*The Ascent on the Tree of Meditation*

Sri Vasistha continued: Having approached the cooling shade of this *samadhi* tree, the deer (mind) becomes enchanted by this tree. It does not turn to other trees of the forest. It aspires to ascend the tree in order to eat the fruit of liberation.

Viveka (discriminative knowledge) constitutes its first step upon this tree. By the practice of *viveka*, the deer is able to renounce attachments to the objects of the world. As dispassion grows, it continues to ascend higher and higher on this *samadhi* tree.

Just as a snake throws off its outer skin and continues to glide on, in the same way, it throws off all its attachments to the world and moves on towards the higher branches of this tree.

Having reached a considerable height, the deer (mind) recalls its previous states of ignorance and laughs at them. It remembers the past days of slavery to the senses and the utter humiliation it used to experience through the objects of the world.

Now, it delights among the branches of the *samadhi* tree, enjoying the divine qualities of compassion, cheerfulness, serenity and cosmic love. It is no longer threatened by the hissing snakes of desire, greed, anger, hatred, jealousy and pride.

Like dissolving mist or dispersing clouds, craving continues to disappear, and the deer-mind continues to experience increasing freedom and bliss. It looks back at its previous states of ignorance and laughs at them.

The deer feels like the emperor of emperors. Its thoughts become sublime and elevating. It beholds the transcendental expansion of the Self. All its previous relationships and entanglements now become like objects in a distant dream.

It beholds the world-process as an illusory appearance, like mirage in a desert. It does not grieve over near and dear relatives. With single minded devotion, it continues to ascend the tree to enjoy the fruit of immortality.

Being nourished by the nectar of contentment, it is not affected by the loss of worldly prosperities. All worldly attainments give rise to pain and misery. Why should a wise person be affected by their loss?

Even a moment of distraction from the state of *samadhi* is considered intensely painful for the deer-mind. Gradually, it ascends the higher rungs of wisdom. It becomes endowed with supreme dispassion.

Having ascended the seventh state of wisdom, it renounces even the intellect and abides in the Self. This is how it tastes the fruit of liberation from the tree of *samadhi*. Having eaten this fruit, it enters into the state of Pure Consciousness, which is devoid of the triad of seer, seen and sight.

O Rama, whoever attains *Brahman* becomes free from the three types of desire—desire for worldly glory (*loka eshana*), desire for sex-enjoyments (*stri eshana*), and desire for wealth (*dhana eshana*).

The mind of a sage becomes like a garland of flowers, ever relaxed in the cosmic expansion of the Self. The mind of an enlightened person never returns to its previous state of ignorance. It is not like the string of a bow that returns to its former position after it has been stretched.

A sage is ever immersed in *samadhi* because his mind, being free from all cravings, is always serene and peaceful. It may be said that a sage has many desires, because his mind engages itself in so many works of cosmic welfare. However, while performing these works, his intuitional vision negates the reality of all names and forms.

When all cravings for the objects of the world are destroyed, the mind of a *jnani* (a wise sage) rests in the Self without any effort. He enjoys effortless *samadhi* at all times. Indeed the destruction of all cravings is in itself the state of *samadhi*.

There is no doubt, O Rama, that when a person develops *vairagya* (dispassion) towards all objects of the world, his meditation on the Self becomes so steady and firm that even gods and demons cannot distract him from his goal. His meditative process becomes as steady as a thunderbolt.

In order to rest in one's essential nature, the first method is the study of scriptures, the second is taking recourse to good association, and the third is meditation on the Self, which is the embodiment of *nirvana* or cessation of all cravings. Wisdom and dispassion coexist in one's spiritual process. If either of the two is promoted in one's personality, the other quality unfolds by itself.

In the state of intuitional revelation, the world vanishes from one's view. Driven by the storm of intuitive knowledge, the little cotton fiber of the world-process is lost in the unbounded expansion of the Self.

Knowledge that remains on the level of intellect alone, without promoting intuitive development, is unable to dispel the illusion of the world-process. Much in the same way, a painting of fire is unable to remove the wintry chill from one's room.

With the predominance of intuitive knowledge, one sees the whole world as an expression of the Divine Self. On the other hand, with the predominance of ignorance, one sees the world as the only reality and the Divine Self as a non-existent entity.

O Rama, the deer of mind is constituted of *vasanas* or subtle desires. When it enjoys the fruit of liberation, it becomes blended in the Absolute. The deer-mind destroys itself by the process of spiritual enquiry and thus rests in the Absolute by being dissolved in It.

Section 46—*The State of Mind after Eating the Fruit of the Samadhi Tree*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, when the mind tastes the fruit of the tree of *samadhi*, it merges in the Self. The intuitional mind which reveals the Self becomes extinct after revealing the Self. Like the flame that is extinguished without oil, so too, the mind disappears in the state of Self-realization.

After enlightenment, the mind of a sage becomes as firm as a mountain without wings. The inclination to externalization is completely negated; the mind becomes Pure Consciousness itself.

When the mind is devoid of discriminative vision, it continues to find reality in the objects of the world. When endowed with spiritual insight, however, it sees only the Self, which is free from the beginning to the end and is the bestower of immortality.

When the objects of the world are not known with a penetrating vision, the mind continues to exist with its illusions and limitations. When the objects are known truly with the intuitive vision of the mind, that mind diffuses itself in the vastness of the Self, like a cloud in the sky.

When the mind itself is negated in one's consciousness, there is no longer any basis for subtle desires, or for elation and depression, anger and hatred. These worldly thought-waves disappear as if into nothingness.

When the mind is purified by the waters of wisdom, a yogi finds no taste in the objects of the world. He sees the varying conditions of the world like objects in a painting, devoid of reality and true life.

Just as a bee becomes immersed in tasting the sweetness of honey, in the same way, the mind becomes immersed in tasting the sweetness of the Self in *samadhi*. Having experienced *samadhi*, the mind cannot turn away from its heavenly bliss. It is goaded by its own taste to be immersed in divine awareness.

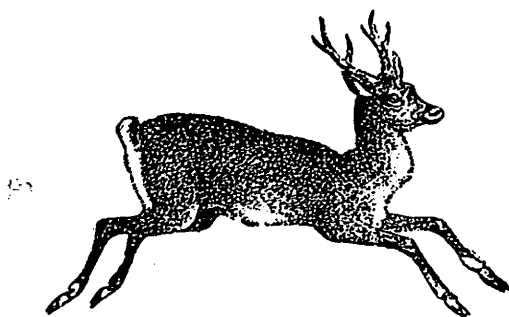
Intense dispassion towards all objects of the world is the surest indication of one's ascent on the tree of *samadhi*. When *vairagya* becomes unflinching, one has attained the

goal of *samadhi*. It is *vairagya* itself which is termed as *dhyana* or meditation as it sprouts and grows in the human heart.

Brahman or the Absolute Self, revealing himself through the intuitive mode of mind, tears the veil of ignorance. Therefore he is known as *jnana* or wisdom. Since he destroys *vasanas* or subtle desires, he is called *dhyana* or meditation. In fact, *dhyana* and *jnana* are expressions of the Absolute Self.

O gentle Rama, an aspirant should first listen to the scriptures from a guru, abiding in good association, and then he should take recourse to the repetition of *Om* with feeling and meaning. This will enable him to glimpse the cosmic expansion of the Self through *samadhi*. When the flow of *samadhi* is interrupted, he should repeatedly practice listening, reflection and meditation until *samadhi* becomes spontaneous and unbroken.

Say good-bye to all your worries and doubts. Abide in the meditative process that leads to *samadhi* and bestows the fruit of liberation. This is the ultimate destiny of the deer-mind: being merged in the Absolute Self.



**Section 47—*The Means of Attaining
Self-Realization***

Sage Vasistha continued: An aspirant seeking liberation adopts the following measures. He takes recourse to good association. His soul, which was exhausted through numerous embodiments, begins to seek peace in the Divine Self.

The very contact with the wise brings great joy in the heart of an aspirant. Peace that is experienced in good association cannot be found even in beauteous gardens abounding with redolent blooms.

Under the guidance of a spiritual preceptor, the aspirant purifies his heart by the practice of selfless service, and comprehends the subtleties of the scriptures by listening to the teachings of his guru. When the heart is pure, the teachings settle deep within it, even like a reflection in a clear mirror.

Nourished by the waters of scriptural learning, the seed of intuitive vision begins to grow in his purified heart. He becomes endowed with the luminous robes of purity, appearing like molten gold.

By the practice of repeated reflection he studies and understands the scriptures, and by adopting selflessness he serves his spiritual preceptor. Gradually the impressions of attachment and hatred begin to wane from his unconscious mind, and he becomes enchanted by the beauty of spiritual thoughts presented by the scriptures.

He realizes that addiction to the objects of the world is an expression of great misfortune. Therefore, he detaches himself more and more from the objects of the world. His face shines with a unique beauty. He is like the moon freed from the dark clouds.

He is shy, as it were, to adopt the attitude of dislike towards the objects of enjoyment because he has turned away from all likes and dislikes. When objects of enjoyment do not arise, he is supremely contented within himself because he already possesses the spirit of detachment.

If an outcast (*chandala*) came to know that he was a *Brahmin* in his previous life, he would begin to dislike his present life. In the same way, when an aspirant comes to understand that he is essentially the Divine Self, he begins to look down upon all his past enjoyments, considering them to be degrading and humiliating.

He plunges himself in the sweet waters of scriptural knowledge, even as an elephant takes a joyous plunge in the placid waters of a lake. By the force of discriminative knowledge, he rides, as it were, on the galloping horse of the purified mind and is able to cross even mighty chasms without much effort.

The misery that arises out of accumulating money in one's life is even greater than the miseries of hell. Wealth, in fact, is a heap of misery and grief. Even the heavenly gardens abounding with celestial delights are unable to satisfy the thirst of the soul for immortality.

An aspirant develops contentment and dispassion. He cuts down the forest of desires by the sickle of contentment, and sows the seeds of wisdom in his heart. He meditates upon the significance of the great utterances and discovers his essential nature.

**Section 48—*The Great Qualities that
Arise due to Dispassion***

Sage Vasistha continued: O gentle Rama, when a person develops dispassion towards the world, he finds good association. When his discerning intellect understands the significance of the great utterances of the scriptures, his cravings for enjoyments vanish. When the objects become tasteless for him, he develops saintliness in his personality.

When the Self is realized, intuitive vision blooms in one's heart, and a wise person no longer desires the wealth of this perishable world. All prosperities of the world become like straw for him.

For a traveler, even useful objects such as utensils only become a burden. In the same way, for a sage, all relationships are a mere burden. He does not abandon them physically, but he continues to abandon them mentally. Physical relationships are conditioned by fructifying karmas. Therefore, though he seems to be observing the cultural pattern of society in upholding various relationships, deep within he is supremely detached.

A wise sage is never attached to any place or condition. He may roam in the solitude of the forests, or by the shores of the ocean, or in the midst of redolent blooms, or in sacred places, or in his own home, or in beautiful orchards. He may sport with his friends, or delight in festive preparations of food, or engage himself in discussing serious spiritual matters. In all cases, however, he is never attached to any external condition. He abides in his own Self and experiences delight out of his own inner being.

It is ignorance that modifies itself into the perceptions of internal and external objects of the world. When ignorance is removed by knowledge, all differentiations are lost and the non-dual Self is realized. When the firm conviction that "All this is *Brahman*" consumes the fuel of worldly impressions like a blazing fire, it is called liberation—the attainment of the supreme abode.

A sage whose heart is free from attachment, hatred, fear, and delusion should be adored. He is verily the effulgent sun that dispels the darkness of ignorance. He is free from the impurity of *rajas*, and he has crossed the ocean of dark *tamas*.

O great-armed Rama, when the Divine Self is pleased by constant devotion, he bestows liberation on his devotee. It is by the grace of God that one attains freedom from the world-process.

That Divine Self is neither at a distance, nor inaccessible. He is your very Self—homogeneous and non-dual. All this exists for the Self. He is the sustainer and the

support of all names and forms. He is the source of all energies that manifest in this creation. The world rises and subsides in the Self.

Creation exists to adore the Self. By the performance of good acts in numerous lives, the great Divinity is pleased. Thus pleased, he sends to his devotee his messenger—*viveka* or discriminative knowledge.

This divine messenger—*viveka*—enters into one's heart like the nectarine moon and fills one's being with delight. Guided by *viveka*, the soul rises above its *vasanas* (subtle desires) and crosses the ocean of the world-process.

Individuality is caused by the presence of *vasanas*. When the *vasanas* are destroyed by the force of intuitive knowledge, the soul discovers its identity with the Divine Self. This Divine Self is the *Om* of the *Vedas*. It is this Divinity who is adored by all beings of the world through austerity, charity, repetition of mantra, study of scriptures, and performance of various religious rites.

The heavens constitute the head of the Divine Self. The earth is his feet. The stars are the hairs on his body, and all living beings are his flesh and bones. He is the indweller of all. It is he who goes everywhere, is awake everywhere, and is the possessor of all eyes, hands, feet, ears, and bodies.

Having awakened the divine messenger in the form of *viveka* and having destroyed the evil spirit (*pishacha*) of the *chitta*, the soul discovers its essential nature. This is the climax of spiritual devotion.

Section 49—*The Greatness of the Wise*

Sage Vasistha continued: For sages, the rising sun of discriminative knowledge continues to dissolve the mist of subtle desires. As a result, they become adorned with unique heavenly qualities. They are endowed with generosity and profundity of the highest order. Even the tempting objects of the fourteen worlds cannot distract their minds. They consider the world as an illusory expression of the Self. They abide in the transcendental silence of the Absolute, wherein the internal and external differentiations of the world, along with the subtle desires, karmas, and worldly limitations are dissolved forever.

All people are aware of the three states of consciousness: waking, dream and deep sleep. It is the fourth state that is revealed to a sage. He abides in this state and therefore experiences the three states as apparent phenomena until his *prarabdha karma* (fructifying karma) comes to an end.

In fact, a sage experiences the silence of sleep even while he is in the waking state. When the ego-sense is destroyed and all subtle desires based upon the ego-sense are dissolved, the world is perceived as the glorious expression of the Divine Self.

When the intellect is unable to understand the unity of existence and the illusoriness of the objects of the world, it continues to move to the varying states of elation and depression. Thus, it experiences boredom, fatigue and misery. By constant practice of *Brahma bhavana* (medita-

tion on the Self), a yogi restores serenity to the functions of his intellect.

Unenlightened thought-waves of the mind lead to the intensification of the illusion of the world-process, and enlightened thought-waves lead to the cessation of all illusions. The same mind that causes bondage becomes the basis for one's release.

It is by the repeated movement of the mind that a person enters into diverse illusions in life. Much in the same way, by repeated movement towards the Self one can reduce one's identification with the body and develop identification with *Brahman*, the Absolute.

Subtle desires carry the individual soul from one birth to another; therefore, they are called *ativaha* (that which carries). The subtle body, constituted of the subtle desires, is called *ativahika* (that which is carried from birth to birth). A sage dissolves his subtle body in the Cosmic Self by the force of wisdom. Therefore, he is no longer an individual entity possessing an astral body.

In the sacrificial hall of wisdom, a wise sage fixes the pole of meditation with intense firmness, and having conquered the whole world, he gives it all away in the form of his sacrificial fee.

Whether burning coals rain from the heavens, or the storm of deluge rages violently, or even the very earth is tossed to the skies, a sage is ever immersed in his blissful Self, despite these turbulent conditions.

Section 50—Seven Types of Jivas

Sage Vasistha continued: The *vasanas* bring about differentiations in the *jivas* (individual souls). Devoid of *vasanas*, all *jivas* lose their distinctions and merge in the Self, like rivers entering the ocean.

Jivas are of different types. Some are steeped in ignorance, and some are on the ascending heights of wisdom. They are roughly classified in the following seven categories:

1. *Swapna jagar* (dream waking) 2. *samkalpa jagar* (thought waking) 3. *keval jagar* (simple waking) 4. *chir jagar* (prolonged waking) 5. *ghana jagar* (intense waking) 6. *jagrat swapna* (waking dream) and 7. *ksheena jagrat* (attenuated waking).

1. These are souls of whose dreams our personalities and realities are constituted. They belong to a different time-space universe. Those whose dreams have the capacity to provide for a plane of existence for numerous souls are called *swapna jagar*. Their dreams become a field of wakefulness for many souls. In fact they are in the possession of a mind which is partially in communion with the Cosmic Mind and is tending to increasing involvement in the world of matter.

2. When these *jivas* are able to project their dreams according to their *samkalpa* or will, they are called *samkalpa jagar*. The story of Jivata illustrates this point. Jivata Brahmana continued to experience a succession of dreams

within dreams led by his own will, and every dream turned out to be a plane of reality for numerous souls.

3. This world of ours has been projected by the will of *samkalpa jagar jivas*. Having projected a world-process, these *jivas* enter into this world and become finite individuals confined to a relative plane of consciousness. They gradually lose sight of their original identities. The day to day world becomes their only reality. They are thus called *kevala jagar* (simple waking).

4. By repeated experiences of birth and death, these souls develop increasing involvement in this world-process. They are called *chir jagar* (prolonged waking). They have been awake to the world of illusion for a long, long time.

5. With the further intensification of gross impressions arising out of violence, greed, and other impure functions of the mind, they enter into restricted forms of consciousness and become lower animals, plants and trees. They are called *ghana jagar* (intense waking) because they are intensely awake only to the fleeting perceptions of a few senses.

6. When the souls take recourse to *satsanga* or good association, they gradually ascend the ladder of wisdom. When they reach the states of *asamsakti* (detachment) and *padartha bhavana* (the experience of non-duality), they find the world like projections of dream. They are called *jagrat swapna* (waking-dream). The world is experienced by them like drifting clouds of mental imagination sustained by the boundless expansion of the Self.

7. When these yogis attain the seventh state of *turiya* (transcendental consciousness), all their mental impressions which are responsible for the awareness of multiplicity in the world-process begin to fade into nothingness. Then they are called *ksheena jagrat* (attenuated waking). The wakeful world of ignorant souls is attenuated and effaced from the consciousness of an enlightened sage.

Having understood the differentiations caused by the *vasanas*, O Rama, endeavor to destroy them by intuitional knowledge and thus experience the cessation of the world-process and the infinite bliss of *Brahman*.

Section 51 — *Effacement of the World-Process from One's Consciousness*

Sage Vasistha said: O wise Rama, an effect cannot arise without a cause. Souls do not arise from *Brahman* as effects. The world of causation is illusory. *Brahman* alone exists when the veil of illusion is torn by the force of intuitive realization.

Sri Rama asked: Who prompts the individual souls towards the development of attachment and other mental entanglements? Who is the creator of the body consisting of mind, intellect, senses and consciousness?

Sage Vasistha explained: No one creates this body, nor is there anyone who urges the souls to be involved in the world of illusion. There is no one who forces the *jivas* towards the development of attachment and hatred. In fact,

the external objects do not exist. It is the Self that appears as the objects of the world.

Pure Consciousness is devoid of internal and external. It is the subtle desires or the *vasanas* that bring about the appearance of the world of multiplicity. When the *vasanas* are destroyed by a yogi, his own Self becomes the highest state of *nirvana*; but when the *vasanas* are intensified due to ignorance, his own self becomes the basis of the world-process.

Those who have developed dispassion towards the objects of the world have access to liberating wisdom. Others cannot experience the state of *nirvana* or liberation. They have fallen in the pits of egoistic vision; therefore, they are unable to behold the glorious effulgence of the Self.

When one is dreaming, he perceives causation in his dream. When he awakens, however, he realizes the illusoriness of that dream cause and effect relationship. In the same way, the causation of the waking state is rendered illusory when the mind is lit up with the light of intuition.

From a limited point of view there exist numerous ornaments made of gold, but from the point of view of gold itself there is only one substance, and that is gold alone. Just as numerous waves are nothing but the same self from the point of view of the ocean, in the same way, the world is nothing but *Brahman* from the point of view of intuitional vision.

Like moisture that condenses into clouds and disperses into the blue sky, the *vasanas* condense into the world-process through ignorance and dissolve into *Brahman* through knowledge.

Just as different fuels become one in a blazing fire, so too, the multiplicity of the world is consumed by the fire of non-duality. He in whom the ego has fled and egoistic desires have dispersed attains the effortless realization of the Self and enjoys supreme peace.

Section 52—*The Self Appears as the World-Process*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, please explain to me the manner in which the immutable Self assumes the role of the world-process.

Sri Vasistha answered: Just as a seed expresses itself in the form of a tree, in the same way, the impressions of the *chitta* bring about the expression of the tree of the world-process. Therefore, O Rama, perform actions that are enjoined in the scriptures and, with a purified mind, engage yourself in listening to my teachings.

Instead of asking, "Where did this ignorance arise?" you must listen to my instructions with profound attention. When you develop intuitive intellect, you will realize that the world does not exist and ignorance is nothing but an illusory phenomenon, like a mirage in a desert.

This world consists of parts and therefore it is destructible. Even if a vessel leaks drop by drop, the water in it must

come to an end. This world must terminate, but the Self is indestructible and indivisible. In fact, this world is a manifestation of ignorance. Even when the world is negated by knowledge, the Self remains as the only Reality.

This world has passed through numerous cycles of creation and destruction. But the underlying Reality of the world—the Self—is ever unaffected by the projections of the world-process. The world cannot be identified with the Self. It is an illusory projection.

The world of multiplicity did not exist before creation. It will not exist in course of time. Therefore, it is unreal even now. The world arises out of the non-manifest and continues to remain non-manifest—as is the cause, so is the effect. It is reality as perceived by the mind tinged by ignorance.

When the world is effaced from one's consciousness, the Self is realized as the non-dual Reality. This Self is beyond the reach of mind and speech. It is devoid of name and form, and It is both existence and non-existence.

The Self is neither air nor fire, neither ether nor mind nor intellect, neither void nor all these objects of the world. The Self is indescribable and transcendental. All mental concepts are negated in the Self.

As long as there is the slightest indication of doubt in the mind regarding the reality of the Self and the unreality of the world-process, so long the intellect has not bloomed into intuition. The intuitive intellect perceives the reality of the Self beyond any shadow of doubt.

Section 53—*The State of Liberation*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, how is every object endowed with its characteristic qualities? How is there durability in time, voidness in the sky, inertness in inert objects, movement in the wind, presentness in the present period of time, futurity in the future, and visibility in visible objects? From where is the multiplicity derived in the multiple objects of the world? O best among the knowers of *Brahman*, please enlighten me to understand the true nature of things in this world.

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, that which appears as durability in time, voidness in the sky, and different characteristics and qualities in different objects is the Divine Self or *Brahman*. That *Brahman* is Pure Consciousness, infinite, boundless, peaceful and one without a second.

Brahman is the final abode into which even Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva merge and find the termination of their existence. *Brahman* is the negation of all that exists. When all names and forms are negated, *Brahman* alone remains.

That Divine Self eludes all human reasoning. He is the author and controller of Cosmic Illusion and all its effects in the form of name, form, the seed impressions, and various principles of limitation.

In the majesty of the Self, even the vast ether is nothing but an inert stone. That Self alone exists. Every object exists

sustained by the Reality of the Self. While all names and forms are illusory, the Self alone is the only Reality.

Consciousness links the seer and the object of his sight within the twinkling of an eye, even though the object might exist a thousand miles away. If one were to perceive consciousness transcending the seer and the sight, one would discover one's essential nature and become liberated.

With the destruction of subtle desires, a sage wakes up, as it were, from the slumber of the midnight of ignorance. He then realizes that state of Pure Consciousness which is devoid of all thought-waves of the mind.

It is this Pure Consciousness which becomes inertness in inert objects, void in the ether, movement in the wind, and different characteristics that manifest in different objects.

Brahman alone manifests in *Brahman* himself. The multiplicity of names and forms is caused by illusion. It is the fullness of the Absolute that continues to sustain the world, which is essentially full. With the negation of the illusion of the world-process, the fullness of *Brahman* alone shines on.

It is the realization of that non-dual Self—who is homogeneous, without rising and falling, vast as the ether, absolutely pure—which constitutes liberation from the cycles of birth and death.

Section 54—*Non-Duality of the Self*

Sri Vasistha continued: The essence behind me, you and objects of the world is the non-dual Self. The characteristics of the objects as well as the objects themselves—all these are essentially the Divine Self. In fact, when the illusory vision of the world-process is negated, the entire universe merges in the homogeneous essence of the Self.

There is no reality of time and space. There is no reality in the multiplicity of objects. The rock-like mass of Consciousness alone exists. This Pure Consciousness is devoid of all attributes of knowing, acting, inertia, enjoyment, immateriality and materiality. It is the non-dual, birthless, all-pervading embodiment of peace.

Life, death, truth, falsehood, good and evil are like waves in the ocean of the Divine Self. Just as waves in the ocean are nothing but the ocean, in the same way, life, death, truth, falsehood, good and evil are nothing but the Divine Self.

That Self is known as Sat-Chit-Ananda (absolute existence-knowledge-bliss). When the knowledge-aspect of the Self predominates, It becomes the knower or the seer. When the existence-aspect predominates, It becomes the objects that are known or seen.

Within a moment, the mind, in its process of cognizing an object, leaves a branch and contacts the moon that is far above the clouds. If it were to transcend both the branch and

the moon and focus itself on the all-pervading ether of consciousness, it would merge in the Divine Self, the underlying basis of the mind which continues to reveal itself through the succession of thought-waves.

In a cinema show a series of pictures are projected on the screen at a certain speed, giving rise to the illusion of continuity. In the same way, the mental projections on the screen of consciousness seem to be continuous and real due to ignorance. Between two projections, the screen continues to reveal itself, though undetected by the limited eyesight of man. So too, the Self continues to reveal itself through the succession of thought-waves in the mind. Between the subsiding of one thought wave and the rising of another is the quiescent Self, wherein the world of time and space is transcended and duality is negated.

The world does not exist even in the form of a seed. It is devoid of a subtle causal state which might unfold like the growth of a mighty tree. How can an illusory snake arise out of a real egg? Instead of looking for a cause of this world-process, one should learn to negate the illusion which has projected *Brahman* in the form of the world-process.

It is the Self that unfolds itself within the Self. Just as movement exists in wind, liquidity in water, and void in the ether, in the same way, this world exists in *Brahman*. Therefore, O Rama, having renounced all the ego-bound thought-waves of the mind, abide in your essential nature, which is vast like the all-pervading ether.

Section 55—*The Absolute Point of View*

Sage Vasistha said: The knowers of the Self perceive the world as an illusory modification of the Self; therefore, they constantly abide in the transcendental state of *Brahman*. The world is nothing but “imagination” of the *mind*—which is ever lit up by the light of the Self.

Objects arise in dream but are non-existent in the waking state. In the same way, the world is perceived as real during the long dream of ignorance, but becomes non-existent when a person wakes up due to the force of intuitive knowledge.

The world is nothing but a dream from the point of view of the Cosmic Mind, but it is a wakeful plane of reality for the individual mind which is conditioned by ignorance.

Just as ripples and waves of water are nothing but the river, in the same way, the world of names and forms is nothing but the Divine Self.

It is the bliss of *Brahman* which sustains even the dreams of birth and death, pain and sorrow, heaven and hell. When the vision of multiplicity is negated, all objects become mirrors reflecting the eternal Self.

In fact, the objects do not exist in the three periods of time. The world of objects is sustained by the conditioned mind. When the mind is freed from the conditioning illusion, it reveals the underlying basis of the Self in all appearances of names and forms.

O Rama, this world-process is a taint in the ether of the Self which should be removed by the practice of spiritual enquiry. The Self alone exists everywhere, at all times, through the diversity of objects.

**Section 56—*The Parable of the
World-within-a-Rock***

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, I shall relate to you a story based upon my own past experiences. This story is delightful to hear and is the remover of the disease of the world-process. It is filled with wondrous accounts.

Once upon a time, my mind became so immersed in the love of wisdom that I resolved to renounce this world and all its illusions. Desirous of finding an ideal place where I could enter into *samadhi* for a prolonged period of time, I began to observe the different aspects of this creation while I was abiding in a heavenly region.

I found the ways of the world insipid and tasteless. Objects are pleasant in appearance, but they harbor the seeds of sorrow and misery. They cause endless distractions in the mind by arousing the impressions of attachment and hatred.

I said to myself, "Let me find a place which is inaccessible to gods, demons and other celestial beings, as well as to all living creatures. There I will enjoy the state of *nirvikalpa samadhi* for a hundred years, undisturbed by the distractions of the world."

But where am I to find the ideal place? What about the mountains and their lofty summits? I observed that even the mountains are constantly filled with noise caused by rumbling clouds, the downpour of rains, and murmuring streams. Even the green valleys are threatened by roaring lions and numerous animals.

While the mountains abound with trumpeting elephants, the dales are filled with savage tribes whose pleasures are envenomed by ignorance. I cannot choose the cities because the inhabitants of the crowded cities are dominated by *rajasic* involvements. They are ceaselessly pursuing excitement through diverse festivities.

Even the ocean does not offer an ideal place for profound meditation. It abounds with numerous aquatic creatures, whirlpools, and the constant rising and falling of waves. The noises of living beings fill even the depths of the nether worlds.

The vast caverns of the mountains resound with the whistling of the breeze and the dancing of creepers. The smiling flowers beckon the mind to be externalized. The lakes are filled with restless lotuses. I cannot find an ideal place by a cascading waterfall, where the air is filled with the stunning sound of incessant splashing.

After these observations, I turned my gaze into the vast blue sky in order to find an ideal place where I could practise undisturbed meditation. Even the celestial realm contained numerous distractions. While the clouds rumble and fill the sky with distracting sound, in the depths of the

sky there dwell numerous *siddhas*, *vidyadharas*, and other celestial beings with their worlds, cities, battles and terrible deeds.

I continued to proceed deeper and deeper into the vastness of space, and having transcended the clusters of stars and planets, I found a place inaccessible to all living beings. There, by the power of my will, I created a hermitage. Abiding therein I passed into *samadhi* for a hundred years. This long duration appeared like a moment because of the intensity of my *samadhi*. Then the moment I woke up from *samadhi*, the evil spirit of egoism and its demoniac wife—desire—asserted themselves in my consciousness, as if from nowhere.

Sections 57-58—*The Negation of Egoism in a Sage*

Sri Rama asked: How is it possible for a sage of enlightenment to be affected by the evil spirit of egoism? Please dispel my doubt, O great Sage.

Sage Vasistha explained: It is impossible for anyone, whether he is a sage or an ignorant person, to exist without the ego-sense. The practical realities of the world cannot exist without the basis of the ego-sense.

While a sage perceives his ego-sense as an illusory manifestation of the Absolute Self within, the ignorant consider their ego as their only identity. Though sustaining the ego-sense, a sage abides in the Self, wherein the ego-sense is ever negated. On the other hand, the ignorant are

unaware of their true essential nature, which far transcends their egoistic realities.

Ignorance is the cause of egoism. As the light of wisdom continues to increase, the darkness of ignorance continues to dwindle. If there were reality in creation, there would be reality in its cause—ignorance. But in fact, this creation is perceived only by the deluded minds of the ignorant.

Brahman cannot be known by the mind and the senses. The world that is known by the mind and senses cannot be caused by *Brahman*. How can there be a tree without a seed? How can there be an effect without a cause?

Brahman who existed in the beginning of creation is the same *Brahman* appearing in the form of the world-process. That *Brahman* is unborn, imperishable, and beyond beginning and end. All this is in reality that peaceful Absolute. Therefore, questions such as "Where did this ignorance arise?" and "What is the nature of egoism?" are baseless.

When the true nature of the Self, which sustains the illusion of ego-awareness, is perceived by the purified intellect, egoism vanishes like a ghost imagined by a child. Every part of creation is sustained by the Reality of the Absolute. Therefore, even the minutest portion of creation is able to sustain the illusions of numerous worlds teeming with numerous living beings. It is possible, therefore, to perceive a universe even in a rock.

Every atom of earth, every drop of water, every ray of light, every molecule of air and every portion of ether contains numerous worlds in their abstract depths. Just as there is no difference between fire and heat, in the same way, there is no difference between *Brahman* and the world. The difference exists in name alone.

**Section 59 — *Sage Vasistha Views
Numerous Universes***

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, what happened after your awakening from the *samadhi* that lasted for a hundred years?

Sage Vasistha replied: When I woke up from *samadhi*, I happened to hear a melodious sound which was enchanting to one's ears. However, it was indistinct, and nothing could be made out of it.

It was a female voice which was like the humming of a black bee or the melody of a veena. It was neither the sound of weeping nor the sound of *Vedic* recitations.

Desirous of finding the source of that sound, I entered into meditation. Having withdrawn my senses into the mind, I ascended to the plane of the intellect. I withdrew the mind into the intellect and the intellect into the Cosmic Mind. With my intuitive vision I became identified with the non-manifest source of all that exists, and therefore I acquired an unobstructed vision.

As I cast my intuitive gaze into the empty vastness of the sky, I found to my great wonder that what I considered an empty space was in fact crowded by numerous worlds.

I saw countless world-systems. People living in one particular world were completely unaware of the other worlds. Some of these worlds were in the process of formation, some were hastening towards their dissolution. Some were still to be born.

Some worlds were constituted of three predominating elements—earth, water and fire. Some were constituted of only the earth and water elements. Some worlds were similar in nature, some were completely dissimilar. Some contained *Vedic* scriptures to guide the spiritual aspirants, and some were sunk in the dark materialistic vision of life.

Some worlds existed as an arena for the after-death experiences of people dwelling in different worlds, and some became the abode of *siddhas* or perfected beings. Like the leaves of a forest, the worlds were countless. Some were lit up by the sun, while some abode in utter darkness. I saw numerous oceans, mountains, suns and moons.

In fact, all these worlds were like toys of clay hardened by the rays of the sun. They were constituted of the clay of ignorance and hardened by the perversions of the intellect.

These worlds do not exist in reality. They are perceived due to the limited vision caused by ignorance. All names and forms are mere waves and ripples in the vast ocean of Divine Consciousness.

**Section 60—*Sage Vasistha Ignores the
Celestial Lady***

Sage Vasistha said: I continued to view numerous worlds in search of the sound I had heard. I converted myself into the ether of consciousness in order to be the support of all that exists.

All of a sudden I happened to cast my yogic vision right near myself, and I discovered a woman who was reciting a prayer. She appeared as if she was the very embodiment of Goddess Lakshmi herself.

She was a woman of youthful age, fair complexion, and her beautiful limbs were as if formed out of the lustrous moon itself. Her face was lit up with a gentle smile.

The heavenly woman was reciting: O Sage, you are like a mighty tree at the banks of the world-process. You are a strong refuge for the souls that are drowning in the stream of the world-process. **You are the conqueror of all the enemies of the soul in the form of anger, desire, jealousy and egoism.** I offer my adorations to you from all sides.

What have I to do with this beautiful lady? Thus reflecting within myself I extended my spiritual gaze and discovered numerous worlds that were invisible to normal sight. The moment I withdrew my gaze by discerning the illusoriness of all these creations, they all vanished and dissolved in my very consciousness. But when I externalized my mind, I again perceived the numerous worlds whirling through the vastness of mysterious ether.

I saw thousands of Rudras, thousands of Brahmas, thousands of Vishnus and thousands of deities. Every world-system was furnished with numerous living beings and their spiritual creators.

I saw seventy-two incarnations of Rama—your own self in different world-systems. I observed hundreds of Satya Yugas and numerous Dwapara Yugas. I saw different types of living beings and different laws that governed their lives. Some were able to see even in darkness, some dwelt in flames. Some floated along with the breeze, some existed in the sands.

Some worlds abounded with snakes, some were filled with jewels. Some living beings were free from greed and egoism, some were sunk in numerous illusions of the mind. Some living beings existed without the organ of smell, some did not possess the vocal mechanism to express their feelings in words. Some did not have the organ of touch. Some worlds were predominating with the earth element. Some were watery worlds abounding with liquid. Some were gaseous and yet contained numerous souls. Some blazed like the sun and sustained numerous living beings whose bodies were also of the same fire element.

I saw souls rising to great heights, as well as souls falling to the depths of the nether worlds. I saw numerous worlds and their inhabitants appearing and disappearing in the vast ocean of the Divine Self, like frothing bubbles that appear and disappear in the vast ocean.

***The Mystic Meaning Underlying the
Numerous World-systems***

The world-process extends from the relative plane of inert matter to the absolute plane of Divine Consciousness. Creations exist as spirals ever reaching out to the summit of the Divine Self.

There are numerous beings on this earth, from the unicellular amoeba to the complex organisms of human personalities, and there are still far more numerous beings in the vast universe which belong to different levels of consciousness.

Though the Self is one and non-dual, It appears as numerous souls operating through numerous minds in the realm of Maya or Cosmic Illusion. Seen through different minds, the worlds are innumerable. Each individual sees the world according to the structure of his mind and the consequent projection of his senses.

Numerous cinema shows are in essence nothing but light. In the same way, numerous world-processes are nothing but the Self. Dreams, though numerous, are expressions of the waking consciousness of the individual. In the same way, the worlds are expressions of the Divine Self.

Imagine the type of world experienced by a whale dwelling in the vast ocean. What tender whispers must it convey to its young ones while dwelling in the abode of

waters? What world is experienced by a tiny mosquito as it hums in the mighty caverns of human ears? What dreams may unfold in the mind of a sleeping sparrow?

What message does a lion receive from the setting sun in a green forest when the western sky is ablaze with different hues of red, and the lakes are gradually enfolded in the long shadows of the night? What world does a jackal experience when it wails at the shining moon?

Clouds which seem to be a vaporous substance to human vision may provide sustenance to numerous souls who perceive in them worlds of enduring substance. In fact, our own world is nothing but a vaporous substance appearing as a solid reality for countless souls.

The entire universe is permeated by its underlying reality—Pure Consciousness. "Prajnanam Brahma—Consciousness is Brahman." Since every part of the world is nothing but consciousness, there is not a place nor an object which cannot form the basis of countless worlds. Even the leaping flames of the sun become joyous abodes for numerous souls.

When the veil of ignorance is destroyed, all these worlds that are seen through the limited minds of countless souls become void of any reality for a sage. Like waves, foam, bubbles and eddies, the worlds arise in consciousness, are fashioned out of consciousness and dissolve in consciousness. Brahman alone is the Absolute Reality.

Section 61 — *The Illusory World Exists in the Heart of Brahman*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, during the destruction of *mahakalpa* (dissolution of the universe) all living beings become merged in the primordial Nature. How, then, does the awareness of the world arise, and for whom?

Sri Vasistha explained: O Rama, during *pralaya* or great destruction, all great elements are involved in *Prakriti*. Therefore, all living beings from the immovable plants to the highest living being—the creator (Brahma)—are withdrawn into *Mula Prakriti* (the primordial Nature).

Brahman, which cannot be described in words, alone remains. That *Brahman* is Pure Consciousness. This world exists in the heart of *Brahman*, just as dreams exist in the heart of a waking person. In fact, *Brahman* is non-different from this world.

It is *Brahman* who projects this world by his mere will. He projects himself out of himself. In reality, *Brahman* sees nothing but himself. Since *Brahman* is imperishable, the world that is projected by him is essentially imperishable. Even *pralaya* or great destruction does not bring about a total cessation of the world-process.

Like seeds that await their proper time to germinate, the souls await the advent of creation while they lie dormant during the state of dissolution of the universe. The cycle of creation and destruction continues, even like birth and

death in an individual, until the individual is able to discern into the Reality of the Self that underlies all illusory names and forms.

It is ignorance that reveals the difference between the Absolute Self and the world-process. When ignorance is destroyed by knowledge, this illusory difference is removed and one realizes, "All this is *Brahman*."

The origin, growth and destruction of the universe—these are imaginations in the mind sustained by ignorance. When ignorance is destroyed, the illusory world-process is negated. Endowed with the vision of wisdom, this world is realized as *Brahman*.

When reflective vision dawns in a person, he considers all the glories of the world as mere straw. A person endowed with this vision discovers his identity as the Divine Self. Having become established in his essential nature, he becomes fully satisfied and blissful.

Section 62—*Sage Vasistha Converses with the Celestial Lady*

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, did you perceive numerous worlds by soaring into the vast space like a bird or by the sweeping vision obtained by your identity with the ether of Consciousness?

Sage Vasistha replied: I was identified with Pure Consciousness, which is all pervading, eternal and infinite. It was impossible for me to move to any place. I was neither

standing in one place, nor was I moving to another place. I saw all these worlds within my cosmic body.

Just as a human being sees his body and perceives its different limbs, in the same way, I saw these numerous worlds with the help of my intuitive vision. Just as dreams arise out of the ether of one's own consciousness, in the same way, the worlds arise out of the ether of Pure Consciousness.

Just as a tree beholds its branches, leaves, flowers and fruits, in the same way, I beheld these creations within myself. Though viewing them as different worlds, I recognized my identity with all of them. Even now I perceive all these creations within my own spiritual body.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, when you were experiencing diverse worlds, what was the lady who was reciting the Arya hymn doing?

Sri Vasistha resumed the story of the lady: O Sri Rama, that celestial lady standing near me continued to recite the Arya hymn with great reverence and humility. She appeared as a divine goddess. Just as my body was constituted of Pure Consciousness, in the same way, her body was also of Pure Consciousness. I had not seen a woman endowed with the ability of identifying herself with Pure Consciousness before.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, the production of sound demands the use of tongue, palate, lips and the movement of pranas (vital forces). In the absence of all these, how did

that woman recite the divine hymn? How can one who is identified with Pure Consciousness discover form and listen to speech?

Sage Vasistha explained: It is Pure Consciousness that manifests as the internal thoughts and the external objects in a dream. In the same way, it is *Brahman* that manifests as the world of names and forms. Various functions of the senses are possible in dream even without the use of the gross organs. In the same way, verbal communications are possible in the plane of Divine Consciousness. In dream, the subject is constituted of dream; his dealings with the objects, as well as the objects themselves, are constituted of dream. In the same way, I, the divine lady, as well as our conversations, were constituted of *Brahman* alone.

Therefore, O Rama, continue to negate the illusions of the world-process that exist as long as your *prarabdha karma* sustains your physical personality. In spite of the practical realities of day to day life and your dealings with diverse objects and human beings, you will eternally abide in the Self, wherein the world-process does not exist.

Section 63—*Brahman Sustains the World of Dreams*

Sri Vasistha said: O Rama, those bodies consisting of the pure will of the yogis do not need the use of tongue, palate, lips and sound box for communicating with others. Just as persons who are dead do not use these organs, in the same way, in the body-less state we do not use the normal organs of the physical world; rather, we converse like bodies in dream.

Sri Rama asked: O Sage, since this world is of the nature of dream, how does it appear to be the solid reality of the wakeful state? Though unreal, how does it appear so real to us?

Sri Vasistha explained: Just as the world of dreams is neither real or unreal, in the same way, all these worlds exist in an indescribable manner.

One world is unable to perceive the reality of another world, just as the dreams of one person are unable to communicate with the dreams of another person. Many worlds are created, many are destroyed. However, the Self that underlies them is ever unaffected.

In the state of destruction, the world of dream continues to stay in the form of consciousness. The substratum is ever unaffected by the projections that are imposed on it due to ignorance.

Covered by the veil of ignorance, numerous souls continue to abide in the dream of the world-process. In the world of dreams, the demons—who are illusory—are killed by the gods—who are also illusory. Since they are killed without spiritual enlightenment they continue to maintain their dreams. However, all their perceptions of birth and death do not affect the underlying consciousness.

We are like dream beings who encounter dream objects and deal with dream personalities. Though people die in their dreams, due to lack of Self-realization they continue to experience repeated birth and death in their dreams.

Enlightened sages wake up from the dreams of the world-process and are not subject to birth and death.

Brahman is the underlying basis of all illusions that are perceived by the conditioned mind. It is *Brahman* that lends reality to every object of dream as well as of the waking world. It is *Brahman* that abides in a wall, in a stone, in water, in land, and in all names and forms. It is *Brahman* who is the Reality behind all that exists.

The worlds that are sustained by *Brahman* cannot be described or numbered or imagined. There is not a single particle of matter that is not capable of sustaining a world as vast as ours, and every particle of that world is still capable of sustaining a similar world. Since *Brahman* is the substratum of every object, it is possible to discover a mysterious profundity in and through every object of the world.

Section 64—*Vidyadhari (the Celestial Lady)* *Tells About Her Life*

Sage Vasistha continued: O gentle Rama, out of mere curiosity I asked that beautiful lady, who was adorned with *malati* flowers and whose eyes were like blossomed blue lotuses, "O beautiful lady of golden complexion, who are you? From where have you come? What do you want? Where have you been? And where do you abide?"

Vidyadhari (the celestial lady) said: O Sage, I am afflicted with great sorrow. Therefore, I have come to seek



your help. Please do enquire of my story without any hesitation, and I will explain all about myself.

In a corner of this vast consciousness, there abides this world of yours. It is like an *ashrama* having three worlds, like three courtyards for the sport of the imagination created by *Maya*—Cosmic Illusion. The earth is adorned with islands, oceans and mountains. At the far corner of this earth there is a mountain called Lokaloka, which seems like a golden bracelet adorning the goddess of the earth.

On the northern part of the mountain there are many jeweled stones. Within one particular stone there abides a world-system in which I am confined along with my husband. We have passed numerous years in that stone.

My husband was born in the family of *brahmins*. He is an ancient soul. From his very childhood he has devoted his life to studying the *Vedas* and teaching *Vedic* knowledge to others. He continues to stay in one place without indulging in worldly pleasures. He is absolutely free from crookedness and fickleness. It is he who created me by his will in order that I may serve him as a companion.

From the very beginning of my existence, I was inclined to music and artistic works. As I grew into a youthful age, I became increasingly inclined to the pleasures of the senses, while my husband and creator continued to confine himself to a life of study and austerity, abiding in one place.

Since I did not receive my husband's attention, I began to be consumed by the fires of desire. When I beheld

wonderful places, my eyes filled with tears. I could not find a place that could afford happiness and peace anywhere in the world. Thus did I pass my youthful days, suffering from sorrow and grief.

**Section 65—*How Vidyadhari Developed
Vairagya or Dispassion***

Vidyadhari continued: O Sage, just as leaves turn yellow in a tree deprived of its life-giving sap, in the same way, my attachment turned into detachment. I realized that my husband had grown old. Therefore, I could see no purpose in view for my physical existence.

It is better for a woman to become a widow at an early age, or even to die, or to suffer from various diseases, than to find a husband whose nature is not in harmony with her desire.

Her life is indeed successful whose husband is ever in accord with her wishes, and whose mind is not affected by various afflictions of the world.

Thus my attachment to my husband became gradually converted into dispassion. My mind saw the essencelessness of all objects of the world. Therefore, I have sought you for attaining Self-realization.

Death is even better than life for one who has not found the fulfillment of all desires and whose intellect has not experienced the supreme peace of the Divine Self.

Just as a king is desirous of conquering another king, in the same way, my husband is ever desirous of conquering his own mind. Therefore, O Sage, please remove the ignorance that affects me and my husband.

I am devoid of the desires of the world. I have developed the yogic powers of flying in the ethereal space. Further, I have developed the power of communicating with illumined sages like you.

By the power of my concentration, I observed the contents of my world and emerged out of its confines. To my surprise, I found that my whole universe existed in a mighty rock.

O Sage, be gracious to me and follow me to my world, where my husband awaits the attainment of release from the illusion of the world-process. May I and my husband both attain release by the help of your instructions.

Sections 66-67 — *The Glory of Abhyasa or Repeated Effort*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, in order to test her understanding, I asked Vidyadhari how it could be possible for her entire world to exist within a rock.

At this Vidyadhari said: O Sage, my world, which exists in the depths of the rock, contains the same spaciousness and multiplicity of objects that your world contains. Even in that world of mine, the water surges in the seas, the wind blows in the atmosphere, and stars and planets continue their functions in the sky.

In my world that exists in the rock, just as in your world, there abide human beings, gods and demons who are ruled by kings and emperors. There are islands, mountains, forests, rivers, valleys, cities and villages. There are aquatic animals in the seas, birds in the air, and different living beings upon the earth.

O Sage, please be kind enough to proceed to my world and view things by your very own eyes.

O Rama, at this I joined Vidyadhari in her celestial journey. Having scaled the vastness of the sky, we reached the mountains known as Lokaloka. Soon we arrived at the golden rock in which the world of Vidyadhari was supposed to exist.

I said to her: O beautiful Vidyadhari, I am unable to see your world in this rock. Where are the mountains and seas? Where are the stars that twinkle in the sky? Where are the living beings and their movements in life and after death?

Vidyadhari explained: O Sage, even I myself am unable to see the world as I saw it before. It appears to me like mere reflections within the mirror-like surface of this stone. This is because all the realities in life are sustained by repeated practice or *abhyasa*.

My association with you has diminished my awareness of the world that is confined to this rock. In spite of your omniscience, you are unable to behold this world because you have not entertained this illusion by your repeated effort.

O Sage, nothing is achieved in life which is not a fruit of repeated effort. All spiritual practices mature and fructify by repeated effort. It is by *abhyasa* that even an ignorant person attains enlightenment. Even the mountains break into shreds of dust by the repeated gusts of wind. This dreadful disease of ignorance can be destroyed by repeated effort alone.

It is by *abhyasa*, the repeated movement of one's mind, that a person becomes one's great friend. Again, it is *abhyasa* that diminishes one's friendliness towards the same person and even converts him into an enemy. Even a small measure of *abhyasa* does not fail to bring about a result. Inimical movements become friendly and poison turns out to be nectar by the force of repeated effort.

Every soul has acquired a world-process due to its repeated effort in numerous lives. Therefore, it is difficult for a person to tear apart all bonds of attachment with a sudden blow. However, by the repeated effort of understanding, he is able to attain *vairagya* (dispassion) towards all objects of the world.

Section 68—*Negation of the Illusion of Physicality in the Subtle Body*

Vidyadhari said: O Sage, let us enter into *samadhi* to assume the subtle body needed for penetrating the world in this rock.

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, then I adopted the lotus pose and entered into deep *samadhi*. Having discarded the

illusory notion of physicality of the physical body, I became as vast and pure as the unbounded sky. Endowed with my intuitive vision, I saw nothing but the Divine Self even in the stone.

O dear Rama, the notion, "I possess this physical body," is born of ignorance. In fact, this body and its functions are illusory. The Absolute Reality is seen as non-dual by the intuitive vision of a yogi, but It is perceived in terms of duality by those who lack intuitive vision. Perception arising through intuitive vision is called *yogi pratyaksha*, while that arising out of limited vision is called *manah pratyaksha*. The physical body is *manah pratyaksha*—sustained by the limited vision of the mind.

That which is perceived by yogic vision is the only reality. That which is revealed through the limited mind and senses is illusory. Pleasure arising out of the illusory objects of the world is in fact a modification of pain. True happiness lies in realizing the Absolute.

The subtle body of all living beings is the reality, but the notion of the physical body has arisen like the presence of an evil spirit due to ignorance.

It is impossible to prove the authenticity and reality of the mind and senses which are employed in the perception of the objects of the world. If this is so, how much more simple it is to understand the illusoriness of the objects of the world. Where great elephants are drowned, who can save the little sheep?

Happiness in objects is transient. This is experienced by everyone again and again. Therefore, it is described as painful.

Happiness arising out of enlightenment is the bliss of the Self. It is eternal, without beginning or end. This is described as true happiness.

Intoxicated by alcoholic drinks, a person sees the trees and mountains moving before his eyes. In the same way, those who are intoxicated by ignorance see reality in the illusory objects of the world.

Instead of perceiving *Brahman*—the Absolute Self—as the Reality behind all names and forms, they believe in the reality of objects and become dependent on them. They become deceitful towards their very self.

**Section 69—*Vidyadhari Awakens the
Brahma of the World-within-a-Rock***

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, assuming a subtle form by my *samkalpa* (will), I followed the movement of Vidyadhari and we both entered the world-within-a-rock.

Within that world, we ascended to the region of *Brahma Loka*. There Vidyadhari sat before the *Brahma* of that creation and spoke to me.

Vidyadhari said: O Sage, this is my husband and my support. In ancient time he created me by his mind to make

me his wife, but a long time has passed and he has not married me. Now I am entering into old age.

With the passage of time, I have developed dispassion towards the pleasures of the senses. This husband of mine has also developed intense dispassion. Now he is intent upon attaining the highest abode (liberation), where there is neither a seer nor a sight, where there is neither the world nor the void.

O Sage, I beseech you to lead us to the absolute goal—*Brahman*—who is the ultimate cause of all these world-systems.

Having spoken thus, Vidyadhari turned to Brahma and began to awaken him. Vidyadhari said: O Lord, here is Sage Vasistha with me. He is the son of a Brahma from another world-system. It is our great fortune that he has graced us by his presence. Please arise from your meditative state and place offerings at his lotus feet.

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, having heard these words of Vidyadhari, the Brahma of that creation woke up from *samadhi*. His eyes opened slowly, like two beautiful flowers blossoming in the spring season. A new vitality began to flow in all his limbs.

Like swans that are drawn to a lake, groups of *devas*, *apsaras* and *siddhas* arrived before Brahma and surrounded him from all sides.

Casting his gaze on me and Vidyadhari, Brahma spoke in gentle words.

Brahma said: O Sage, you know the entire creation like a berry fruit placed on the palm of the hand. You are like a rain cloud to bring down a shower of nectar. Welcome to you, O great Sage.

Sage Vasistha said: O Lord, the Creator, I offer my adorations to you. Why is it that this goddess came to me and invited me to come into this world-system to impart spiritual wisdom?

Having created Vidyadhari for the purpose of marrying her, why didn't you accept her?

Brahma replied: O Sage, let me explain to you the truth of this matter. As you know, the Absolute Self or *Brahman* alone is real. That *Brahman* is of the nature of Pure Consciousness—unborn, imperishable, indescribable, the very embodiment of peace.

Like a wave I have manifested from the ocean of *Brahman*. In fact, I am nothing but *Brahman* or the ether of Pure Consciousness. When creation is projected, I am called Swayambhu (the self-born). In reality, however, I am neither born nor do I behold the world of multiplicity.

Like waves interacting with waves, I am holding conversations with you. In this ocean of non-duality, I have permitted a tinge of duality and have become the creator of this world system.

Vidyadhari is the goddess presiding over the *vasana* (subtle mentations) of the Cosmic Mind. She is not my wife, nor did I create her for that purpose.

Led by her own mentation, she has imagined that she is my wife and that she has been created by me for that purpose. In vain she has suffered from intense sorrow. In fact, she is the indwelling *vasana* in every being.

**Sections 70-71 — *Vasana Bent upon
Its Own Destruction and the
Consequent Destruction of the World-Process***

The Brahma from the world-within-a-rock continued: O Sage, my individualized existence is about to terminate; therefore, the whole creation is about to be destroyed. This is the reason why this Goddess of Vasana (*Vasana Devi*) has developed dispassion towards all objects of enjoyment. She is bound to follow me in order to be dissolved in the expansion of Pure Consciousness.

What applies to the Cosmic Being also applies to every individual. When the intuitive vision of the soul is ready to destroy the illusion of the world-process, the *vasana* in him assumes the form of aspiration for God-realization. It transcends the bounds of the ego and senses and glimpses the vision of the transcendental Self.

Vasana Devi followed my inner resolve to destroy this world by developing intense dispassion towards all names and forms. She was able to transcend the limitations of this world in order to contact you, O Sage Vasistha. Driven by

her urge to withdraw all that has been created by me, she was able to develop great psychic powers.

O Sage, please depart to your world and enjoy the supreme peace of *samadhi*. This world of mine is soon going to be destroyed by great *pralaya* (cosmic deluge). All the elements will be withdrawn into the state of the non-manifest. I am ascending to my true abode, which is the supreme Self.

Thus saying, Brahma sat in deep meditation and passed on into the unceasing state of *samadhi*. Vasana Devi (Vidyadhari) also assumed a state of supreme repose and became like the void. As Brahma withdrew his senses, the world which was his own body began to crumble by various destructive forces that were let loose during the cosmic *pralaya*.

Earthquakes began to shake mighty mountains, while dreadful storms played with the mighty summits as if they were little balls to be thrown into the all-devouring ocean of destruction. The stars and planets were shaken by the mysterious wind as Brahma withdrew his pranas into his deeper Self.

Sections 72-73—*Description of Pralaya in the World-within-a-Rock*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Sri Rama, *Brahman* is the only Reality. There is neither non-existence nor existence. *Brahman* is of the nature of Pure Consciousness, devoid of all modifications.

It is *Brahman* that assumes the role of mind and expresses itself in the form of the Cosmic Ego of *Brahma*. This ego-principle, having entered into a series of illusions, becomes the planes of existence, the living beings that abide in them, and all the objects of the numerous worlds.

When the truth of *Brahman* is known, the *vasana* or subtle desire of the mind is dissolved. Then the multiplicity of the world is negated, and *Brahman* is realized as the only Reality.

Brahma or the Cosmic Mind is like a cloud of mentation (*samkalpa*) rising in the vast sky of *Brahman*. The illusion that is projected by the Cosmic Mind of *Brahma* assumes the form of the world-process, consisting of numerous planes of existence.

The world is nothing but the body of *Brahma*. When *Brahma* withdraws his mind and allows his mentations to be stilled in the expansion of his innermost consciousness, the vast universe created by him enters into a process of utter annihilation.

Therefore, O Rama, renounce the *vasanas* and become free from the afflictions of the mind. Do not enter into the jugglery of words. Be led by your *prarabdha karmas* (fructifying karmas of the past) without causing further entanglements in this world of illusion.

O Rama, just as a dust particle is so minute compared to the mighty Himalayas, even so, this vast universe is like a minute particle before the vastness of the Absolute. Just

as a mortal person sees in his dream his own death, in the same way, the atomic form of Brahma sees within himself the dream of cosmic creation.

It is the atom of Consciousness that becomes Brahma, or Narayana, or Rudra. It is the same atom that becomes even a minute germ. Though assuming different forms in the world of illusion, *Brahman* alone exists as the only Reality.

Sun, moon and wind are the three humors of Brahma. Mountains are his bones and clouds constitute his fat. The stars are the drops of vapor proceeding from his blazing mouth. Such is the mysterious body of *Virat* (Brahma).

Sections 74-75—*The Body of Brahma and Its Destruction*

Sri Vasistha continued: O Rama, the absolute ether of Consciousness is the primary body of Brahma. His Cosmic form is a minute expression of the Absolute.

The sky is the palate of Brahma, while the stars are like blood particles coursing in his veins. Different living beings are ripples and waves of his cosmic vitality.

The sun and moon are his eyes. Brahma Loka is his face. The higher worlds constitute his skull, while the lower worlds form his feet.

Just as a worshipper imagines himself seated before his deity in the region of his own heart, in the same way, Brahma projects his finite form within his own cosmic body and dwells in the realm of Brahma Loka.

When Brahma entered into *samadhi*, the world which constituted his body began to yield before the terrible forces of destruction.

I saw twelve suns blazing in the sky. These were the eyes of the terrible God of destruction — Rudra. In order to escape the all-consuming fires emanating from the brilliant suns, I flew into the depths of the sky.

Soon the seven oceans began to boil like a broth. The mountain tops turned crimson as the solar beams began to dissolve the silvery snows. Pillars of smoke spiralled to the heavens. There was chaos all over the world.

It seemed the whole world was suffering from a high fever. Living beings in villages and cities were pounded and crushed. The sages broke open their skulls by the force of *samadhi* and ascended to the Absolute.

The fire of cosmic destruction appeared like a dancing girl. She was dancing in the delapidated hut of the world-process. The flames of fire were her ornaments, the sounds of destruction were her musical accompaniments. The dark smoke constituted her hair. Her dance swept across the mountains, rivers, oceans, men, gods, demons and all living beings as well as all forms of existence.

The very Himalayas melted like wax within a moment. All became a prey to the gaping mouths of destruction. The ether of the Self alone remained unaffected. The living experiences of the world now became like a shadow of faint memory.

The blazing fires were soon followed by the deluge winds that were let loose from the vaults of heaven. They trumpeted like millions of elephants and tore down even the stars from the heavens. The dark clouds gathered in the sky, containing the waters of the seven seas in a fragment of their gigantic form. A chilling breeze blew above, while fires raged beneath. This was followed by deluge waters that poured down incessantly, devouring all gross forms in the creation.

Sections 76-78—Description of the All-Destroying Fire Below and the Deluge Clouds Above

Sage Vasistha continued: The all-destroying winds began to blow, shaking the mountains, agitating the seas with gigantic waves and rending the sky with fierce storms.

O Rama, the earth and mountains were filled with burning embers, and the whole atmosphere was engulfed in fire. Twelve suns began to blaze in the heavens, emitting the fire of destruction.

The dark clouds of destruction gathered in the sky, dancing with lightning and roaring with deafening thunder. They came like an army of camels carrying loads of water

on their backs and poured down torrential rains, creating a mighty deluge.

The elements—earth, water, fire and air—became agitated. The three worlds began to disintegrate and appeared like forests of tamala trees blowing in the wind.

The three worlds were covered by five types of clouds—clouds of ashes, clouds of smoke, clouds of destruction, clouds of vapor and clouds of water particles.

The huge surges of the sea carrying fragments of rocks were tossed aloft by the fierce winds of destruction. They dashed against their shores, breaking them and pulverizing them with tremendous noise.

There remained neither the sky nor the directions; there was neither upside nor downside in the vastness of space. The creation vanished. All living beings were destroyed. There surged nothing but one infinite sheet of water.

Section 79—*The Creator and His Family* *Enter into the State of Liberation*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, while the whole universe was being devoured by the waters of deluge, I directed my attention to Brahma Loka, much in the same way as the sun directs its rays on the earth at the time of sunrise.

Brahma and Saraswati (Vidyadhari) and all the attendants were immersed in *samadhi* and appeared like statues.

Gods such as Shukra, Brihaspati, Indra, Kubera, Yama, Soma, Varuna and Agni were also present. *Gandharvas*, *siddhas*, *rishis*, and various celestial beings were all seated like painted pictures. The deities of the twelve suns, having accomplished their task of universal destruction, arrived at the same spot. They sat in lotus pose and entered into *samadhi*.

Very soon, Brahma reached the state of wakefulness by negating the world which he had projected by his will. The moment he did so, all the gods and celestial beings disappeared. Just as on waking the dream world vanishes, even so, the world of Brahma vanished.

O Rama, by exercising my discerning intellect, I realized that all those who had accompanied Brahma in his region had entered into the state of liberation.

As long as Brahma maintains his *vasanas* (subtle mentations), so long the world continues to exist. When he withdraws his *vasanas*, the world vanishes.

The world is of the nature of *vasanas*. Led by *vasanas* the mind becomes externalized, causing bondage. The world is experienced through the outgoing thought-waves of the mind; therefore, it is illusory in nature.

When the *vasanas* subside by knowledge, the thought-waves become internalized. The mind dissolves in *Atman* (the Self).

O Rama, freed of the relative concepts of bondage and release, may you ever abide in your essential Self. May you enjoy *nirvana* or liberation, wherein the *vasanas* and cravings subside, and the Self is realized as the non-dual, eternal, pure, infinite *Brahman*.

Sections 80-81 — *The Dance of Rudra and Kali*

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, the inhabitants of Brahma Loka along with Brahma entered into *nirvana*. Their forms vanished like flames that are not fed with oil. Even the blazing suns that brought about the destruction of Brahma Loka were extinguished.

Then I saw a strange phenomenon which was immensely terrible to behold. I saw the terrible form of Rudra (Shiva), which appeared like an ocean of darkness. Though intensely black, the form was shining by its own effulgence.

Rudra had five faces, ten arms, and three eyes. He held a spear in one of his hands. He was emitting fire from his person. The breath proceeding from his nostrils was capable of agitating vast oceans. He was the very embodiment of the Cosmic Ego.

He is called Vyom Varna (sky-complexioned) because he is of the essence of Pure Consciousness. He is the Self of all beings. Therefore, he is all-encompassing in his gigantic form.

The five senses in every individual are his five faces. The five organs of action and their functions are the ten arms of Lord Shiva, which operate through all living beings. All human hands and feet are indeed expressions of Lord Shiva's body.

His three eyes represent: the three *gunas* (*sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*); the three periods of time (past, present, and future); the three aspects of mind (*chitta*, ego, and intellect); the three syllables of *Om* (A, U, and M); and the three basic *Vedas* (*Rik*, *Yaju* and *Sama*).

This great Rudra swallowed up the deluge waters that had submerged the entire universe. His gaping mouth was filled with luminosity. Just as snakes enter into holes, in the same way, the five elements were withdrawn into Lord Shiva, who is the very embodiment of Pure Consciousness, the Absolute Self.

Then great Shiva began to dance, accompanied by the terrible form of his consort, Goddess Kalaratri, the principle of unmanifest nature. Kalaratri assumed the towering form of a skeleton, and began to dance with Shiva like his shadow.

This Goddess is also known as Kali—the Terrible. Her three eyes were filled with fire. The entire cosmos danced with the Goddess. The world systems were like withering petals from her garland. She was the embodiment of the dynamic energy of Shiva, ever involved in the creation and destruction of the worlds.

After the completion of this destructive process, Rudra again assumed his gentle form as Shiva—the non-dual *Brahman*, the underlying Reality of the Universe.

(The staggering vision of Divine Consciousness is figuratively described in the form of the dance of Rudra and Kali. An aspirant must discover that intuitive vision within him which negates this entire world-process and reveals the non-duality of the Self.)

Sections 82-83—*The Dance of Rudra is the Sport of Consciousness*

Sri Rama asked: When everything was destroyed during *pralaya*, what body did the Devi adopt, what were her adornments, and what objects did she hold in her hands? How could a dance be possible when the whole world had ceased to exist?

Sage Vasistha explained: O Rama, this is the figurative description of the dance of Consciousness. Rudra is in fact *Brahman*, who is Pure Consciousness, imperishable, infinite, self-effulgent, all-pervasive, existence-knowledge-bliss absolute.

It is *Brahman* who expresses himself through his *Maya* (power of Cosmic Illusion) in various forms. To the enlightened mind, the world-process is nothing but the dance of *Brahman* (Shiva or Rudra) and his *Maya* (Kali).

O Rama, these many forms of the world-process—birth, death, delusion, dullness, reality, unreality, discrimi-

native knowledge, bondage, liberation, good, evil, knowledge, ignorance, form, formlessness, a moment, a long duration of time, existence, non-existence, folly, wisdom, time, space, causation, activity, sense-perceptions, thoughts of objects, senses, organs of action, earth, water, fire, air, ether, etc.—are nothing but sportive expressions of Pure Consciousness.

Brahman sustains this world of illusion without ever abandoning his essential state of Pure Consciousness. Figuratively speaking, this world is the dance of Pure Consciousness, which has been described as Shiva or Rudra.

It is Pure Consciousness that appears as Vishnu and manifests as *Brahma*—the Creator. It is *Brahman* who expresses as the moon, the sun, Indra, Varuna, Kubera, fire, wind, cloud, and the great ocean. Whatever there is and whatever there is not—all this is nothing but the supreme Self.

Even the state of dissolution of the world is merely a playful expression of Consciousness. It is nothing but the dance of Shiva in the form of Rudra.

Sections 84-85—*The Mystic Meaning behind Shiva and Shakti*

Sri Rama asked, O Sage, what is the mystic meaning behind the form of Goddess Kali, and what are the objects that are held in her hands?

Sage Vasistha explained, O Rama, I have told you how it is *Brahman* or Pure Consciousness who is termed as

Shiva. The energy behind his mental projection is called Goddess Kali. Kali or Shakti is not different from Shiva.

Just as air and its motion or fire and its heat are not different, in the same way, Shiva and his energy are one and the same.

Just as the power of motion points to wind, and the power of burning points to fire, in the same way, Goddess Kali reveals the glory of Shiva.

Expressing in the form of *jiva* consciousness, Kali is known as Chiti-Shakti. She is the life of the living beings. It is she who has manifested in the form of this entire creation.

After *pralaya* or universal deluge, it is the Devi (Kali) who manifests as numerous suns and dries up the waters of deluge. Therefore, she is known as Shushka—the drier of the world-process.

Because she expresses her wrath against the demoniac forces, she is called Chandika—the terrible. Her body appears as the blue lotus. Therefore, she is called Utpala.

Ever the bestower of victory, she is called Jaya. Being the giver of *siddhis* or psychic powers she is called Siddha. As she is the basis for victory, she is called Jayanti and Vijaya.

Because of her immeasurable valor, she is called Aparajita (undefeated). She is ever undaunted by obstacles;

therefore, she is called Durga. Being the essence of the mystic syllable *Om*, she is called Uma.

Since she protects anyone who sings her praises, she is called Gayatri. Being the source of the universe, she is called Savitri.

She is the bestower of insight relating to action, meditation and wisdom; therefore, she is called Saraswati.

The embodiment of *sattwa* (purity), she is called Gauri (the fair complexioned). She forms the half portion of Lord Shiva's body. In fact, Shiva and his Energy—Kali—are of the ether of Pure Consciousness. They are also termed as Kala (the time spirit) and Kali (the black one).

O Rama, this Kala Ratri (Kali) performed her dance in the great ether along with Rudra. In the course of her dance performances, she touched Rudra (Shiva) and she became merged in Shiva.

Kali, being the energy of Shiva, destroyed the world and then entered into Lord Shiva and became one with him.

Sections 86-87—*Meditation on the Universality of the Self*

Sage Vasistha explained: Having identified myself with my essential nature, *Chidakasha*, the ether of Consciousness, I viewed the manifestation of creation like a person who sees the rising dream-world. Pure Consciousness became *chitta* or mind-stuff by being tinged with the function of reflection (*chintana*).

From the *chitta* emanated *ahamkara* (ego-principle) with the affirmation, "I am vast like the sky." This *ahamkara* became further limited by a decisive movement in the mind which is called *buddhi* or intellect. The same *buddhi* assumed the role of the fluctuating mind, termed as *manas*.

The Self imagined the rising of the subtle element of sound. From sound arose the element of touch, and from touch arose the element of sight. The element of sight gave rise to the element of taste, and the latter evolved the element of smell. These five subtle elements became the basis of the five senses of perception.

Just as a dream arises within a moment, in the same way, this world-process asserted itself within a moment in my Pure Consciousness. All names and forms in this world are nothing but Pure Consciousness.

When I willed to see, there emerged the organ of sight, and all that is seen became the visible world. The will to exist in an individualized form gave rise to the perception of space. When I began to develop the awareness of sequence in happenings, I came to experience the movement of time. Thus, all other senses as well as objects of the world emerged as appearances of the Self.

The first sound I spoke—like that of a newborn child—was the sound of *Om*. I became Brahma, the creator of the universe. My body existed as mental process alone. Though performing the role of Brahma, I was abiding in the Self, wherein no change or modification can occur.

Then I practised *prithvi dharana*—identification with the earth element. I became the vast earth, upholding on my body mountains and valleys, cities and villages, deserts and forests, surging oceans and islands, murmuring rivers and coursing streams, and the bodies of numerous living beings.

The thousand hoods of the Shesha serpent were sustaining my body, which had the Himalayas and Vindhya Mountains as its shoulders; it was adorned by the jewelled necklaces of Rivers such as the Ganges and Yamuna. The Sumeru Mountains constituted the neck which I stretched to behold the expansion of the sky.

Wearing the turban of the clouds, I was abiding in the temple of immense space. I became the basis for germinating trees and plants, as well as tiny insects that abode in the crevices of my vast body. I was also the sustenance for numerous creatures of the earth, such as gods, demons, human beings, and lions.

Sections 88-89—*Identification with the Earth Element*

I witnessed people rejoicing their good fortunes with dances and music. I also saw those who were afflicted with sorrow. While some danced with joy, there were others who rent the sky with their pathetic cries.

I saw the sufferings of people who were being consumed in blazing fires. In certain places people were being carried away by turbulent floods of the ocean. I was

sustaining the diverse conditions of human beings. At some places robbers were performing their hideous activities of murder and loot. In other places people were being destroyed in terrible wars. There were places where peaceful conditions prevailed, and people lived with joy and contentment.

I was able to perceive even the experiences of minute insects. I shared their joys and sorrows. While great tuskers trumpeted in mountain valleys as they struck their mighty tusks again and again against trees, there were sages who were experiencing thrill because of their spiritual ecstasy. Their joys were my joys.

I was able to perceive the joy with which the seeds unlock the life force from their hearts as the rain descends upon them from the heavens. I sported with the lotuses that bloomed in beautiful lakes.

Though sporting in creation through numerous forms of the earth element, I was ever abiding in the Self. The earth element is an illusory modification of the Absolute or *Brahman*.

Section 90—*Identification with the Water Element*

Sage Vasistha continued: After identifying with the earth element, I next exercised my power of mental concentration and became one with the water element.

I became surging seas and expansive oceans, bearing upon myself loads of grass and straw, loads of plants and shrubs, and trunks of trees, which appeared to my watery body like leeches and bugs.

I became the life-giving water for quenching the thirst of all living beings. I became humidity permeating the atmosphere, descended as dew, and slept on leafy beds in the form of icicles.

I became the stream of water descending from a mountain top in the form of a waterfall. Then I turned into a thousand splashes.

As vapor I rose from the earth, and ascending higher and higher, I became blended with the blue sky. I resided on the tongue of every living being and permeated the atmosphere in the same way as the creator permeates his creation.

Becoming the clouds and riding on the back of the driving clouds, I came down on the earth in the form of torrential rains, filling the atmosphere with a sweet fragrance.

O Rama, though I became one with the water element by my special power of concentration, yet I was always aware of my essential Self, who abides in all as the Absolute Knower.

**Section 91—*Identification with the
Fire Element***

Sage Vasistha continued: O Rama, by my power of concentration, I became one with the fire element. The moon, sun, stars and fire—all these became limbs within my effulgent body.

All the colors, the beauteous expressions that exist in the world, are due to the fire element. I became the father, the originator of all the colors—white, black and red.

Becoming the luminous rays of the sun, I scattered darkness just as a fierce wind disperses a cloud. During sunrise and sunset, I painted the sky with luminous red and vermillion colors.

I became the lustre in gold, diamonds, and precious stones. I became the valor in valiant men. Manifesting as the flashes of lightning, I dazzled the eyes of people.

I became the forest fire splitting and cracking the trees. I became the sacrificial fire accepting sacred oblations. I became the sparks of fire emitted by the strokes of a hammer from the red hot iron of blacksmiths.

Sri Rama asked: Please tell me, O Sage, what was your feeling, whether you felt pleasure or pain, while you were experiencing all this within the confines of the rock?

Sri Vasistha replied: O Rama, if it were possible for a person to experience deep sleep without the loss of waking

awareness, that would be comparable to what I experienced in this situation. I became identified with the fire element but, at the same time, remained fully aware of my inner Self as *Brahman*. (This is the state of sleepless sleep or *sahaja samadhi* experienced by the enlightened.)

Section 92—*Identification with the Air Element*

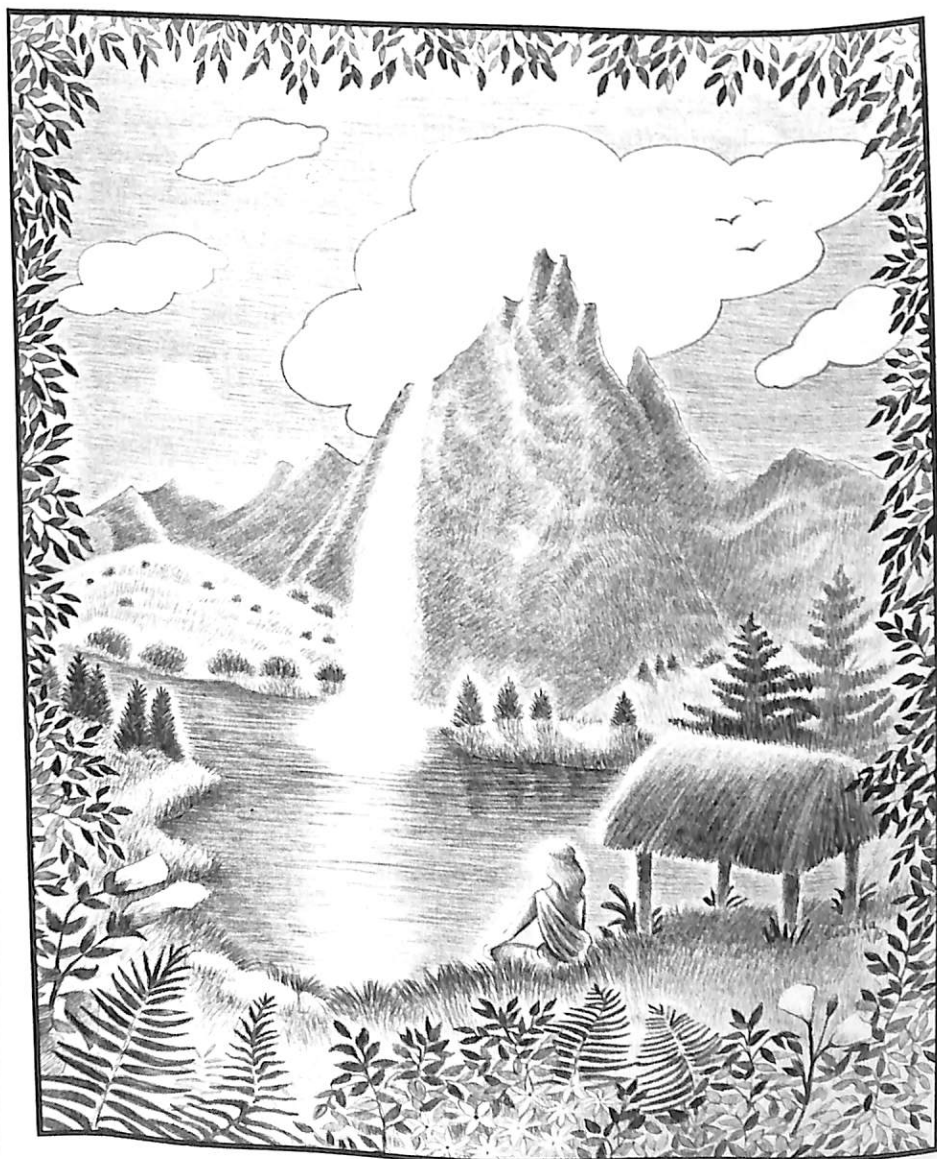
Sage Vasistha continued: Desirous of experiencing the world by the exercise of *dharana-shakti* (concentration), I became one with the air element, and began to dance with the creepers and the trees.

I became a breeze, eager to view the beauty of the plants all about me. I carried the coolness from rains, snows and dew drops that would restore vitality and freshness in the tired limbs of weary laborers.

I bore the essence of medicinal plants and the fragrance of flowers, and traveled as a gentle breeze during the auspicious hours of morning and evening. At times I assumed the terrible form of tempests and storms and was able to tear down rocks from the mountains.

Assuming the form of the pranic currents, I moved freely in the city of the body. Performing the vital functions, I kept alive the body of every individual being.

Like shepherds driving their herd, I drove the clouds in the sky. I played with lightning and thunder and blasted the showers of rain.



Sage Vasistha Becomes Identified with
All the Elements through Meditation

Tirelessly I performed these six-fold functions: congealing liquids (turning water into snow and ice), drying up muddy lands and wet substances, upholding the clouds, causing tremor in the blades of grass, and conducting fragrance from one place to another.

I experienced in my own Self a thousand worlds, mountains and seas. All these appeared like carved statues in a giant rock. This earth, containing the seven great continents, became like a bangle around my wrist.

O Rama, I became the whole universe, and the nether worlds became my feet. The earth abode in my stomach. The sky was my head. I beheld in my own being a thousand worlds with their mountains and seas. Though experiencing unity with all, I never lost the awareness of my essential Self—*Brahman*.

Just as consciousness in an individual assumes the form of the dream state, in the same way, the Self has become this vast universe through Its *Maya* (the power of Cosmic Illusion).

Section 93—Sage Vasistha Encounters a Siddha in His Etherial Hermitage; Discourse on Vairagya

Sri Vasistha continued: Having completed my sportive identifications with the universe, I returned to the etherial hermitage which I had created for practising meditation. There I looked for my body, which I had left in a meditative

pose. However, I could not find my body. Instead, I saw the body of a *siddha* in a meditative pose.

The moment I willed to go back to my world, the celestial hermitage melted away before my very eyes, and the *siddha* fell towards the earth. O Rama, the celestial hermitage was sustained by my will. Therefore, the moment I decided to turn away from that mental creation it vanished into the vastness of the sky.

With my subtle body I followed the course of the falling *siddha* and saw him alight gently on the earth. Though he fell from such a great height, he was not injured even in the slightest. Having fallen upon the earth, he continued to be in *samadhi*.

I tried to awaken him. I assumed the form of clouds and brought forth torrential rains accompanied with lightning flashes and peels of thunder. At last the *siddha* came to body consciousness.

Seeing him awake, I asked him: O Sage, from where did you come? Do you know that you have fallen from a great height? Please tell me all about yourself.

The *siddha* spoke: Adorations to you, O great Sage! Just as a black bee travels through numerous lotuses, so I have traveled through numerous pleasures of the world. I have been drifting along the whirlpools of the mind for a long time. Gradually I developed *vairagya* or dispassion and reflected upon the illusoriness of the objects of the world.

This is the essence of my reflections. I realized that there was nothing worth desiring in the transient objects of the world. If I consider the objects to be other than the Self, they would be non-existent. If I consider them to be the same as the Self, it would be foolish to desire them.

Old age is like a crane by the river banks. It captures the fish of life in a quick movement of its beak and devours it with pleasure. The physical body is like a bubble that must burst in the ocean of the world-process. Human life is like an oil-fed lamp which must be extinguished when the oil is consumed.

Life flows on like a great river. The distractions of the mind are the tidal waves. The changing conditions of life are like the whirlpools. Birth and death are the banks. Pleasure and pain are the ripples. The excitement of youthfulness is like the mud, and old age is like the white foam of this river. The bubbles of pleasure continue to arise in the midst of the swirling waters of misery.

Nothing is permanent in life. That which was once enjoyed and coveted has vanished in the realms of the past. That which is being enjoyed now will not exist in the future. That which is not even being expected now will arise in the future. There is nothing in the world that one can depend upon.

As though it were mounted on a potter's wheel, human life continues to evolve varying conditions of pleasure and pain. Changes continue to occur in every object of the world.

Desires for objects lurk in the mind like thieves. They rob a person of the jewel of his discriminative wisdom. Human life is being perpetually destroyed by the spirit of time. Though seeing life fly into shreds as time passes by, one does not realize the fact of death.

Always engaged in vain thoughts of yesterday, today and tomorrow, the mind is unable to perceive the passage of time. One does not know that unawares he has passed most of his life chasing the illusions of the world, and he is hastening to the open jaws of death.

I became fed up with the repetitive pattern of joys and sorrows, and the relentless instability of all objects of the world. I could not find any place that could give rest to my wandering soul.

All objects of the world are nothing but expressions of elements. All trees are nothing but wood. All living beings are nothing but flesh and blood. All earthen vessels are nothing but earth. Pain and instability have pervaded this world. How could I find security anywhere in this ocean of transience?

When the dragon of death hastens to devour a man, he becomes helpless in spite of his wealth, his friends, his prosperity and his relatives. This human personality is like a sand dune which will soon be dispersed by the blowing winds. It is like water abiding in the clouds which must rain down. Attached to the objects of the world, one is being consumed by death at all times.

What charm can a person find in the perishable objects of the world? The intellect is afflicted with restlessness, and objects are devoid of any real substance. Alas! The charm of essenceless objects would have robbed me of my life had I not turned my mind towards the imperishable treasure of the Self. Now I am abiding in wisdom.

Men of discrimination consider worldly prosperities as expressions of mighty afflictions. They are not deluded by the lures of objects. Led by the illusions of egoistic desires, a person continues to perform selfish actions in order to sustain his individualized consciousness from one life to another. Indulgence in karma renders a person dull in his reflective capacity.

People who are ingrates do not appreciate the joys of gentleness. In the same way, the mind of a worldly person does not move towards the cultivation of spiritual qualities such as discrimination and dispassion.

Human life is like a gust of wind. Friends prove to be enemies because they intensify the afflictions of attachment. Dear relatives are like fetters that tie the soul to the world-process. Wealth is an agent of death itself.

Objects are pleasant only for a moment. However, within that moment of their pleasure they sow seeds of unknown miseries for the future. Wealth is charming from a distance. When a person becomes a prey to greed for wealth, he is led to untold miseries.

Having reflected upon the illusoriness of all objects, I became free from *vasanas* or subtle desires. I found su-

preme peace in the Self. Such joy is not seen anywhere in this world.

I decided to practise intense meditation on the Self. I looked for a place that could be free from all distractions. While sojourning through the heavens I found a *kutir* far away from the reach of all living beings. That was the *kutir* which you (Sage Vasistha) had created by your will.

I thought that some *siddha* must have occupied that place before, and that he had attained liberation. Thus I took my residence in it. O Sage, please forgive me for removing the lifeless body and abiding in the hermitage that you had projected.

Sections 94—Sage Vasistha and the Siddha Return to Their Abodes. Story of the World-within-a-rock Concludes

Sage Vasistha said: O Rama, having heard the story of the *siddha* I said to him: Friend, you should not blame yourself for the thoughtless act of removing my body. I too was thoughtless in withdrawing this projection of the celestial *kutir* and thus allowing you to fall into this golden land. Even great sages need to exercise their mental concentration in order to gain an insight into the things of the world with relation to their past, present and future. Let us return to our abodes.

Then we both returned to our abodes—the *siddha* went to the world of *siddhas*, and I went to the world of the *saptarshis* (the seven great sages). Thus, O Rama, I have related to you the mysterious story of *pashanopakhyana*—the world-within-a-rock.

About Swami Jyotirmayananda And His Ashram

Swami Jyotirmayananda was born on February 3, 1931, in a pious family in Dumari Buzurg, District Saran, Bihar, India—a northern province sanctified by the great Lord Buddha. From his early childhood he showed various marks of future saintliness. He was calm and reflective, compassionate to all, and a constant source of inspiration to all who came in contact with him. Side by side with his studies and practical duties, he reflected upon life's deeper purpose.

An overwhelming feeling to serve humanity through a spiritual life led him to embrace the ancient order of Sanyasa on February 3, 1953, at the age of 22. Living in the Himalayan retreats by the sacred River Ganges, he practised intense austerities. In tireless service of his Guru, Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj, Swamiji taught at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy as a professor of religion. In addition to giving lectures on the Upanishads, Raja Yoga and all the important scriptures of India, he was the editor of the *Yoga Vedanta Journal*. Ever able to assist foreign students in their understanding of Yoga and Vedanta, his intuitive perception of their problems endeared him to all.

Swamiji's exemplary life, love towards all beings, great command of spiritual knowledge, and dynamic expositions on Yoga and Vedanta philosophy attracted enormous interest all over India. He frequently lectured by invitation at the All India Vedanta Conferences in Delhi, Amritsar, Ludhiana, and in other parts of India.

In 1962, after many requests, Swami Jyotirmayananda came to the West to spread the knowledge of India. As founder of Sanatan Dharma Mandir in Puerto Rico (1962-1969), Swamiji rendered unique service to humanity through his regular classes, weekly radio lectures in English and in Spanish, and numerous TV appearances.

In March, 1969, Swamiji moved to Miami, Florida, and established the ashram that has become the center for the international activities of the Yoga Research Foundation. Branches of this organization now exist throughout the world and spread the teachings of yoga to aspirants everywhere. In 1985, Swamiji founded an ashram near New Delhi, India, which is now serving the community by offering yoga classes, by publishing the Hindi Journal, *Yoganjali*, by assisting the needy through a medical clinic, and by furthering the education of children through the Bal Divya Jyoti Public School.

Today Swami Jyotirmayananda occupies a place of the highest order among the international men of wisdom. He is well-recognized as the foremost proponent of Integral Yoga, a way of life and thought that synthesizes the various aspects of the ancient yoga tradition into a comprehensive plan of personality integration.

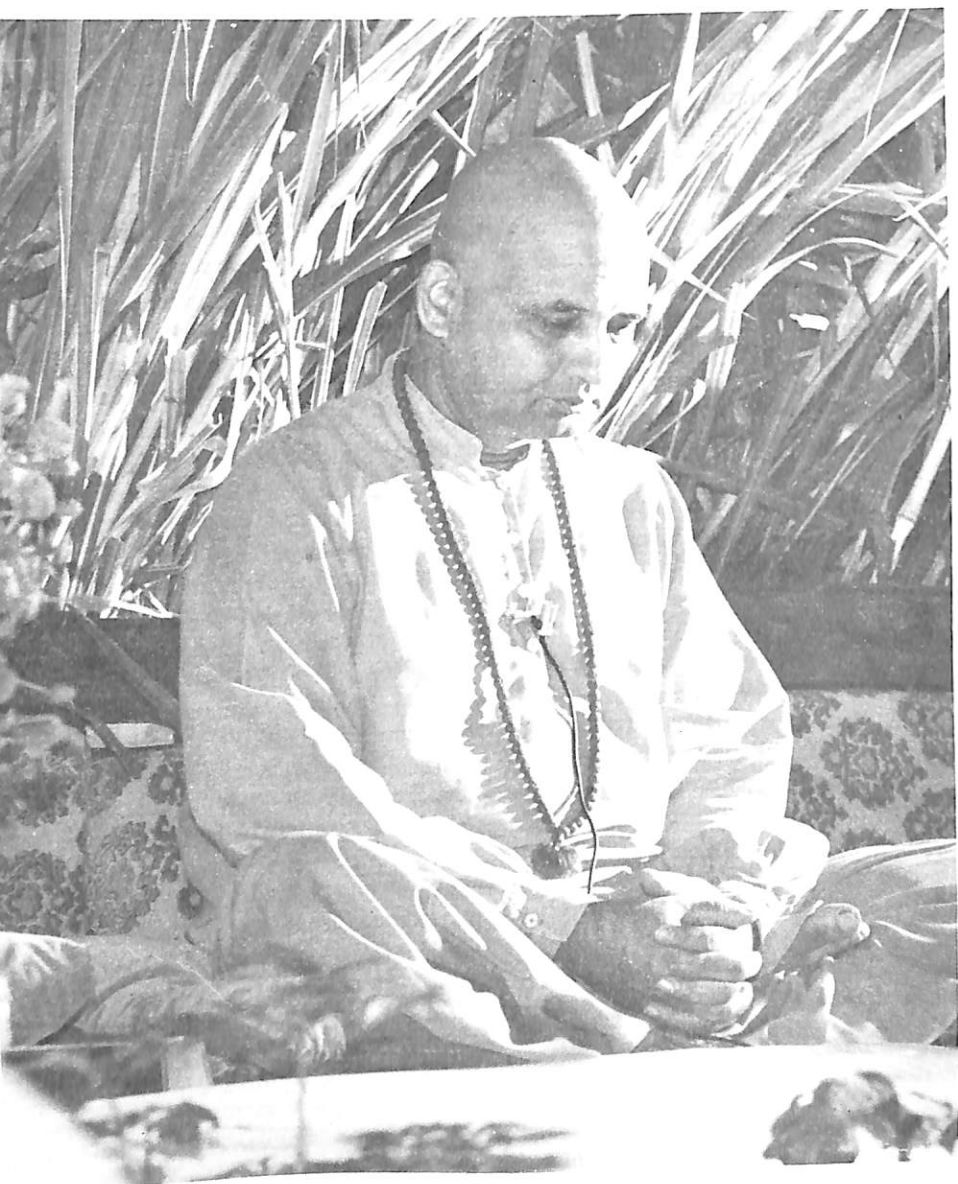
Through insightful lectures that bring inspiration to thousands who attend the conferences, camps and philosophical gatherings, Swamiji shares the range and richness of his knowledge of the great scriptures of the world.

His monthly magazine—*International Yoga Guide*—is enjoyed by spiritual seekers throughout the world. His numerous books and cassette tapes are enriching the lives of countless aspirants who have longed for spiritual guidance that makes the most profound secrets of yoga available to them in a manner that is joyous and practical.

Despite the international scope of his activities, Swamiji still maintains an intimate setting at his main ashram in Miami that allows fortunate aspirants to have the privilege of actually studying and working under his direct guidance. In the lecture hall of the Foundation, Swami Jyotirmayananda personally conducts an intense weekly schedule of classes in *Bhagavad Gita*, *Yoga Vasistha*, *Mahabharata*, *Upanishads*, *Panchadashi*, the *Bible*, Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga and meditation.

With a work/study scholarship, qualified students are able to attend all classes conducted by Swamiji tuition-free. In return, students devote their energy and talents to the Foundation's noble mission by serving in the bookshop, offices, press, and computer and publication facilities.

Both the Yoga Research Foundation and the main ashram lie in the southwest section of Miami, two minutes from the University of Miami and 15 minutes from the Miami International Airport. The main ashram is on a two and a half acre plot surrounded by trees and exotic plants, reminiscent of the forest hermitages of the ancient sages. Adjoining are subsidiary ashrams that house student residents and Foundation guests. The grounds are picturesque, abounding with tall eucalyptus and oak trees, a fragrant mango orchard giving shelter to numerous birds and squirrels, and a lake of lotus blooms reflecting the expansion of the sky. In this serene yet dynamic environment, the holy presence of Swami Jyotirmayananda fills the atmosphere with the silent, powerful message of Truth, and the soul is nurtured and nourished, allowing for a total education and evolution of one's inner Self.



Author Swami Jyotirmayananda

From ancient times, the devotional beauty of the epic story of Rama has given untold inspiration and delight to countless aspirants. In *Mysticism of the Ramayana*, the subtle philosophical implications of this colorful epic are illumined by Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda's spiritual insight, and the infinite grandeur of the Ramayana truly shines forth. In the gracious light of

Swamiji's vision, all spiritual seekers will soar on the wings of devotion and wisdom to the highest summits of spiritual bliss!



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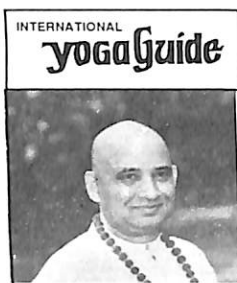
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